

WIRE

THE INDEPENDENT MUSIC MAGAZINE

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JOHN COLTRANE
ON RECORDS

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MULLIGAN!

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BAZ FE JAZZ

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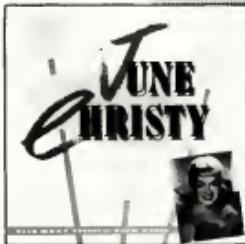
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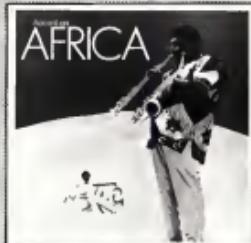
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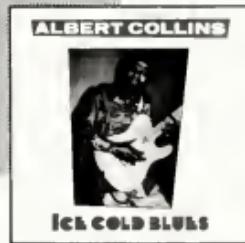
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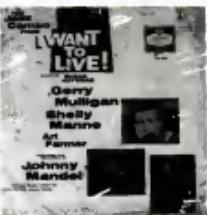
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FOUNDER Anthony Wood
EDITOR Richard Cook
ADVERTISING, MARKETING AND PROMOTION Joanne Harris
ACCOUNTS Jan Diacon
NEWS AND PHOTO EDITOR Jayne Houghton
SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ADMINISTRATION Chris Parsons,
 Caroline Bowen
DESIGN Paul Elliman
PUBLISHER Chris Parker

THE WIRE
 A Member of the Narama Group
 Units G & H
 115 Cleveland Street
 London W1P 5PN, England
 Telephone 01-580 7522

TYPESetting M C Typeset, Chatham
PRINTING Kingdale Press, Reading

The Wire is distributed by NS Distribution,
 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1 3AU.

The views expressed in The Wire are those of the
 respective contributors and are not necessarily
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COVER:
 Lester, Our Man



NOW'S THE TIME

JAZZ WARRIOR

THE ABIBI Jazz Arts are a collective of young black musicians who initially came together to give a concert which would provide numerous young black jazz artists in London the opportunity to perform together. This seed of an idea germinated and grew to massive proportions in the magnificent shape of the 19-piece JAZZ WARRIOR!

Due to an excellent reception at the first concert, at The Fridge last month, the band are setting their sights on bigger and better things. Their intentions are to give British jazz something distinct, different and dynamic.

Jazz Warriors features Juliette Roberts (Working Week), Courtney Pine, Carol Thompson and The World's Farse Saxophone Posse. Catch them later this spring.

ENO AT THE RIVERSIDE

RIVERSIDE STUDIOS, Hammersmith, is proud to host the first major exhibition in the UK of Brian Eno's video paintings and sculptures, opening on 26 March for four weeks only, under the title Place 11.

Internationally renowned as a musician and artist, Eno has recently been making a name for himself in the video world. As the exhibition's title implies, the exhibition is the eleventh of its kind to be held, although the first in this country. Creating an environment into which an audience is drawn, Place 11 should be a stunning exhibition, with largely abstract works constructed out of sound and light - of flat, mutating video paintings - or sculptures in which video is used as a source of illumination.

Ticker prices £2 (50p concessions)

INDIES CALL THE TUNE

A SUCCESSFUL independent record industry, with public backing, is crucial to the future of British music, says a major GLC report.

It says the 'indie revolution' that broke through the multinationals' control of the industry was directly responsible for enormous advances in musical literacy among young people.

The report (*The State Of The Art Or The Art Of The State?*) claims that, with the number of independent labels falling from 2,550 in 1980 to a mere 300 today, the key to viability lies in distribution. The GLC invested £70,000 in the CARTEL, an indie distributor made up of seven small companies with GLC-backed Rough Trade a major shareholder.

RAVING IN NOTTINGHAM

THE GARAGE, in Nottingham, is the venue for a new club called RAVE. The club, which plays the best in jazz, Latin and African, is every other Wednesday and boasts a relaxed atmosphere (although usually packed to capacity) and a selection of life-size paintings of all the jazz greats on the walls. Admission is £1.50 and the club is open 9-2.

MORE JAZZ ON THREE

A FURTHER DOSE OF BBC jazz is served up by Radio 3 this month. On April 9, at 7.30pm, Mike Westbrook supplies the music to Adrian Mitchell's new play *White Suit Blues*. And earlier in the same day at 1.05pm, Richard Cook begins a series of programmes examining Sonny Rollins on record.

ARILD ANDERSEN QUINTET

LEADING NORWEGIAN jazz outfit the Arild Andersen Quintet visits England for the first time in April to undertake a tour organized by Jazz Services and presented with the assistance of Visiting Arts.

Combining the melodic talents of the ECM sound with the spirit of The Jazz Messengers, this group has quickly become one of the major attractions in European jazz.

The quintet recently completed a new album for ECM which will be previewed on this tour.

APRIL

- 10 COLCHESTER, Arts Centre
- 11 CAMBRIDGE, Man In The Moon
- 12 LONDON, Donmar Warehouse
- 13 MAIDSTONE, Hazlitt Theatre
- 14 AMBLESIDE, Zeffirelli's
- 15 LEICESTER, The Braunstone
- 16 NOTTINGHAM, Clarendon College
- 17 COVENTRY, Bulls Head
- 18 CHELTENHAM, National Hunt Rooms
- 19 EXETER, Arts Centre
- 20 BIRMINGHAM, Triangle



Arild's team

BIRKENHEAD Glenda Jackson Theatre

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, Corrie House

SHEFFIELD, The Leadmill

MANCHESTER, Band On The Wall

STOCKTON ON TEES, Dovecot Arts Centre

LEEDS, Trades Club

BRIGHTON, Salis Benney Hall

EASTERN JAZZ ALL STARS

EASTERN JAZZ, usually a hive of activity, is sending out its finest musicians under the banner Eastern Jazz All Stars, in April.

The geographical criterion for membership has nevertheless resulted in a group of experience and critical acclaim, their collective pedigree including work with Humphrey Lyttelton, Alex Welsh, Ted Heath and The Pizza Express All Stars. The group will perform material drawn from the Dixieland era as well as Duke Ellington and more recent composers.

Tour dates in April are: Quay Jazz Club, Sudbury (6); University Arms Hotel, Cambridge (8); Hull Workshop, Hull (9); Chelmsford Jazz Club, Chelmsford (13).

BASS CLEF BOOGALOOS!

LONDON'S BASS Clef club has started 'Boogaloo Night' every Tuesday at 8.45pm. Guest DJ is Gillie Peterson, who will be playing the best in Latin, soul and modern jazz. Guest bands in April are (1st) Flesh; (8th) Stargazers, (15th) Spain; (22nd) Dislocation Dance.

£3 admission.

NEXT OF KINTONE

AFRICAN BAND KINTONE are hitting the road in April to promote their successful debut album *Going Home* on Serums Records. Dates are (18th) Cambridge, Man In The Moon; (19th) Marlock; (20th) Leeds, Trade Club; (22nd) Newark on Trent, The Bowling Green; (23rd) Darlington, Arts Centre, (27th) Derby, (29th) York, Art Centre; (30th) Sheffield, Leadmill. More dates in May are still to be confirmed.

MISTEAKS

WE HAVE TO APOLOGISE TO some of our team: the Courtney Pine and Iain Ballamy features we credited in reverse last issue, Messes Nicholson and Clunn did Iain, Messes Colemans and White did Courtney. And we managed to spell Charles Garvie and Jane Henery wrongly on the cartoons piece. Sorry!

JAZZ SUMMER SCHOOL '86

FOLLOWING LAST year's very successful course, Humberside College of Higher Education has again booked Ian Carr and Nucleus to teach on this year's course which will be held in Hull at the Cottingham Road site of the college from Monday 28 July to Friday 1 August inclusive. Once again there will be instrumental tuition, small group improvisation and larger ensemble work.

The tutors include Ian Carr, Alan Skidmore, Jeff Castle, Mark Wood, Dill Katz and John Marshall.

The course places are filled very rapidly, as the maximum for each instrument category is eight people. Fees are £50 (non-residential) and £105 (residential). Further details are available from Pat Bidderick at the college, (0482) 41451.

SHEFFIELD NEWS

HIGHLY ACCLAIMED Sheffield Bass Tone Trap played their last gig recently. The band's split was not caused by the standard "musical differences" but in fact because "most of the band didn't consider Bass Tone Trap to be a priority". Apparently if they'd had a chance to do a second record a year ago ...



Horn Web Sax Quartet

Also from that celebrated nucleus of activity in the North (who said we feature only London bands?) Horn Web Sax Quartet, whose first album will be appearing soon on the Cadillac label, are embarking on an April tour with another Sheffield band, Wire Assembly. The programme for this tour contrasts the tightly structured compositional style of Horn Web with the more open-ended and textural approach of Wire Assembly. Dates are: (April 10) Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield; (18) Union Tavern, London; (21) Cooler Club, Leicester; (23) Humberside Film Theatre, Hull; (25) Temrite Club, Leeds; (26) Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal; (2 May) St Jerocho Tavern, Oxford.

DOUG DOBELL 40 YEARS IN JAZZ RECORDS

WE HAVE a habit of making jazz institutions over here, but one of the best-known and most popular must be Doug Dobell and his record emporium. This month, Doug celebrates 40 years in the business of selling jazz records.

"I messed around on piano for a few months when I came out of the army," he remembers, "but one realizes that if one hasn't the talent for it . . . ! I thought, well, my father's got a business. Why don't I sell jazz records there?"

Thus began, with 100 78s from his own collection, the Dobell's Jazz Record Shop that operated out of Charing Cross Road for decades. "In the beginning, if I took £1.20 on a Saturday, that was really something!" But aside from the lean period when the block in Charing Cross Road was demolished, Doug's maintained a steadfast profile in a parlous area of the record business.

Despite record chainsstores offering a wider array of jazz than they ever have done, the presence of a specialist still counts for something.

Doug still has an office in the shop's bright and airy premises in Tower Street. Music drifts in from the house stereo; books and records line the walls. It's a pleasant setting. But after all this time in the business of selling the music, has he managed to retain his original affection for jazz?

"I like to enjoy my breakfast with jazz records," he smiles. "I still love to listen. My favourite musician is Art Tatum - being a frustrated pianist!"

Richard Cook

CLUB DATES

LEICESTER The Cooler

(7th) John Russell

NORTHAMPTON Dergate Jazz Club

(6th) Fenny Stompers

(13th) Stray Cats New Orleans Band

(20th) Tad Newton Jazzfriends

(27th) John Dunville's Ragtime Orchestra

NOTTINGHAM Bonnington Theatre

(10th) Alan Price

NOTTINGHAM Rhythm Club

(10th) Dutch Swing College Band

COLCHESTER Art Centre

(24th) Meantime

SOUTHAMPTON Joiners Arms

(8th) Steve Franklin Group

(22nd) A.G.M.

SHEFFIELD Grapes Inn

(13th) Ken Hyde/Tim Hodkinson Duo

WARRINGTON The Studio

(16th) Apitos

LEEDS Trades Club

(20th) Kintone

NOTTINGHAM Old Vic Tavern

(23rd) Footprints

(30th) Maggie Nicols/Peter Nu

CAMBRIDGE Chilford Hall

(26th) Ronnie Scott Quintet

NEWCASTLE Corner House

(29th) Jack Walrath & Spirit

Level

ALDERSHOT Art Centre

(4th) Tommy Chase Quartet

BIRMINGHAM Triangle Art Centre

(6th) Keith Tippett with Dreamtime

SOUTH HILL PARK Art Centre

(1st) Five Leaf Clover

(8th) Lennie Best Quartet

(22nd) Park Swing Band

(26th) Pete Allen Band

(29th) Cayenne

SHEFFIELD The Leadmill

(2nd) Pinski Zoo

BRIGHTON Richmond Hotel

(11th) Pinski Zoo

NOTTINGHAM The Hipp

(16th) Pinski Zoo

SHEFFIELD The Leadmill

(9th) Iain Ballamy Quartet

(16th) Jo-Anne Kelly

(30th) Kintone

SWINDON Link Centre

(3rd) Weller/Spring Quartet

(25th) The Saxter

WARRINGTON Padgate Centre

(16th) Apitos

BANBURY Moat House

(15th) Mike Dennis and Vibes

(29th) John Betts Big Band

DERBY Browns

(6th) Pinski Zoo & Wojciech Konikiewicz

DERBY Phaze Six

(10th) John Russell

GAINSBOROUGH Trinity Art Centre

(18th) Danny Moss & Sweet Chorus

ASTON Barton Arms

(7th) Iain Ballamy & Django Bates

(11th) Henry Lowther & Paul Dunmall

(18th) Bob Shew

OLDBURY Hen and Chickens

(6th) Garry Alcock All Stars

(8th) Apitos

(10th) Stan Tracey Quartet

(17th) Courtney Pine Quartet

LONDON

ICA Theatre

(1-5) Matilde Santing

BARCAN CENTRE - Lunchtimes

(6th) Harry Pitch

(13th) Body & Soul

(20th) Harry Beckett Quintet

(27th) Paul Carr Trio

100 CLUB, Oxford Street

(28th March) Happy End

(30th) Microscope Septet

LONDON 100 Club

(18th) Stan Tracey Big Band

LONDON ICA, The Mall

(30th March) Loose Tubes/

Pinski Zoo

LONDON Upstairs At Harrys

(2nd) Rootaboga

(9th) Some Like It Hot

(16th) They Came From Plymouth

(23rd) The Swing Masters

(30th) Eduardo Niebla

LONDON Bass Clef, NI

(2nd) Dick Pearce Quartet

(3rd) Pete Beachill

(6th) Stan Tracey

(9th) Don Weller Quartet

(10th) Iain Ballamy

(13th) Paul Carmichael

(16th) Amy Mackintosh

(17th) Five

(20th) Terry Smith Blues Band

(23rd) Star People

(24th) Clark Tracey

(27th) Jim Mullen

(30th) Trombone Extravaganza

THE SOUND OF AFRICA

By Mark Staker

PROMOTION OF AFRICAN MUSIC BEING THE LAST-MINUTE THING IT is round these parts, I can't offer you much more than hope and rumour for April, as of time of writing. Rumour, for example, that the Burundi Drummers will be appearing at the end of the month, to replace Adam Ant in our percussive affections. Rumour that Les Amazones de Guinée are going to capitalise on their sell-out success in February with three follow-up dates at the Africa Centre in the dying days of March (the sell-out took at least one seasoned Africa watcher by surprise, I can tell you, when he left ticket buying to that usual casual last minute, and thus missed the legendary singing Policewomen altogether . . . barrumph?).



Part of the problem seems to be that April's something of a rest-cure weekend, this year. March has just seen Ghana's 29th Birthday celebrations, Franco's OK Jazz marking 30 years, the inaugural burst of activity at the Roundhouse, as well as a number of famous Jazz and other festivals. And May/June generally sees an influx of visitors, when this music can bask in temperatures more suited to its relaxed all-night marathon performance style. However (only singled out virtue of superior advance publicity) the Bass Clef continues to cement its reputation by bringing together Charlie Asaah Papa with a fine selection of London-based players, on the 19th. Other than this, probably best to stick with records: the Spring releases from Earthworks, Globescale and Sterns look all of them worth checking out in depth.

No way yet found to keep you clued up on events outside London, let alone the UK, but from next month we'll try and get you word from Paris and Amsterdam as well, (deadlines permitting), these being centres of considerably more standing than London in the continuing rise of Electric Africa worldwide . . .

THE LATIN SOUND

By Sue Steward

THINGS COME full circle in Latin music terms as one of the West End's original rumba clubs — the high society 30s Embassy Club — turns Thursday nights into Latin nights. "The Little Pole" — Polacoloco aka To'Mek of Solar Radio — spans the discs with a guest accomplice each week . . . the latest in the burgeoning of places to dance to rumbas, guaguanco, mambo, chachachas. Otherwise, the Latin music club scene continues to run in the hands of a handful of DJs and impassioned — Hucker, Murphy, Peterson and Bar, the veterans, and a new generation of newcomers tellingly revealing that Latin music is no bad part of the fabric of London's clubland.

A recent newcomer is the Gaféira (Brazilian) club, relocated in South Ken at Roxanne's, and weekly (Thursdays). Gaféira not only offers the best of flown-in sambas, forros, and chorinhos, Gilberto Gil and Gal Costa, but also boasts The Café Brasil in another part of the building. More sedate audiences who go for that other side of Latin music — the folkloric-rooted, the political song, and the acoustic instruments — can find shelter every Thursday at the White Conduit in Barnsbury Street, N1, where the landlady Maria Elena has converted an ordinary Islington pub with her Peruvian drapes, posters and guest musicians from Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil . . .

Paul Murphy has switched his attentions from the discs to the live event and now in cahoots with Stuart Lyon is planning some killer concerts. Their projected Ruben Blades visit for early May in Hammersmith

Palais is one of the best reasons for not emigrating yet, and good timing; it will follow closely after Channel Four's delayed showing of Robert Mugge's "Return Of Ruben Blades" documentary, recorded last year just around Blades' graduation from Harvard and return into the centre-stage of salsa's integration programme.

Like Murphy, Gilles Peterson is another Saint in the annals of Latin Music in this country. Gilles Streetsounds' project *Jazz Jive* has a follow-up in production — the only leak I could squeeze from Gilles was a late 50s or early 60s conga battle between Ray Barretto and Carlos "Patato" Valdez, an Irakere big band dance track, and more Flora Purim. *Jazz Jive* I sold 20,000 albums on one ad in *Eloise*, is Latin-jazz still minority music?

The most exciting tape I've heard this year is a sneak preview of last year's New York concert at SOB's club — three nights of Celia Cruz. Her teaming with Daniel Ponce in a concert of Yoruba songs was pure genius. The resulting music, a battery of percussionists led from Ponce's masterconga kie, with organ, and chanted voices, brings Celia back to the material she sang as a young girl, and neglected after her move to the U.S.

Emotional, powerful, evocative, when Verne Gillis, the concert's deviser, finalizes a record deal, this will be one record which will make another memorable bump in Celia Cruz's extraordinary career, and takes it full circle, but the career rolls on. All we need now is news of another visit from this great lady.

*"Emotional,
powerful,
evocative,
passionate!"*

STROPY COW

WOMEN AT WORK

"STROPY COW records is an independent feminist label that exists to encourage women to make their own kind of music in their own time and space without the counterproductive pressures of commercialism. The music industry often restricts creativity by predetermining images and roles that women have to conform to in order to be heard. The policy of Stroppy Cow Records is to encourage women to define their own musical output and to be involved in every stage of production."

So read the sleeve notes on Stroppy Cow's latest release, *Possibilities*, by Ova, in itself a collective of four women — two musicians, Rosemary Schonfeld and Jane Rumfull; sound engineer Livvy Elliot; and administrator Jenny Gibbs. *Possibilities* is the second release on Stroppy Cow by Ova.

"The label's title," says Rosemary, "was born when Jenny was working in a studio with men and one said to her, 'Since you've been involved with Ova you've become a real stroppy cow,' and the name just stuck. People either love it or hate it, but it's quite memorable."

"We'd obviously like commercial success but the object of the group is to enable women to work together, to grow together — strength in numbers. Over the last ten years women's bands have sunk without trace if there's been no record of them on vinyl. Ova has been together 10 years and has experienced censorship to such an extent that this was the only natural solution."

The label is without finance at present, but is sufficiently stable to be able to boast an impressive amount of equipment and skilled women to enable records such as *Possibilities* to see the light of day. Stroppy Cow also run workshops for women and are permanently on the look-out for women photographers, engineers, promoters etc. who feel that the music business is too restrictive to women to be able to function to their best ability in such an environment.

Ova and Stroppy Cow can be contacted at Highgate New Town Community Centre, 25 Bentham St, London N19 (01) 281 2528.

Jayne Houghton



RICHARD BUTCHINS

JONATHAN ROSE

A MAN AND HIS LABEL

"WE'RE DOING awesomely well," boomed Jonathan Rose, in a fair impersonation of R.D. Cook. He was speaking of his New York label Gramavision Records which, after the obligatory years of struggle, is shaping into a strong repository of new American music with a powerful jazz bias.

Rose is recording a lot of hot properties: Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Billy Hart, John Scofield, Kazumi Watanabe, heavyweights in the zone that crosses easily between post-hop, fusion and neoconservative fields. How does he select an artist to work on?

"It's a slow, thoughtful process. I'm a believer in old-style A&R. The musician has to be a very fine composer and a consummate musician, which is hard to find as a combination. And they have to have developed their career already, to the extent where they've won the respect of their peers."

So Rose is a little reluctant to bring on complete newcomers. He even originally turned down Stanley Jordan — "Well, his career certainly developed!" Gramavision treat their players with respect: there's the kind of attention paid to recording, sleeve and pressing that you expect from an ECM-style operation.

"We have less of a cohesive style than ECM," suggests Rose, "but in general there is a proviso that recordings are very clear and improvisations are concise. Long solos are great live but not necessarily on record."

He has a separate label, Gravity, for the so-called New Age music that Windham Hill has cultivated an American taste for — "the problem there is A&R. What turned people on to Windham Hill was George Winston. Now a lot of people are picking up on the image, but it takes an artist to make music which sells."

"The audience for our sort of music is changing enormously, and for the good. People in their 20s, 30s, young 40s — they're looking for music with a little more substance and are turning more and more to jazz. This is why Wire is so important. You're going to be the guide for people."

Hey, this guy Rose has his head screwed on.

Richard Cook

Rosemary Schonfeld of Ova

SCOTTISH JAZZ COMPOSERS

WRITE ON

THE WHOLE concept of jazz composition has been regarded with some suspicion by many listeners, a situation exacerbated by the insularity of too many jazz fans when faced with anything not recognizably swing or, stretching it, bop. Where bridges have been built, it has tended to be by (or want of a better word) classical composers assimilating jazz elements into their work; with the possible exception of Ellington, in whom it seemed a natural enough step, the ventures by jazzmen to alien territory have been seen as aberrations, or sidelines at best.

The feeling persists that there is something vaguely inimical about the two elements, jazz and composition. One man who clearly disagrees is Scottish guitarist Francis Cowan, who, with Platform's Roger Spence, has launched the new Scottish Jazz Composers Group. The intention is to make the Group a flexible centre for the commissioning and performing of works which will permit jazz writers the scope and freedom to experiment with both composition and classical modes;

Their aim is to tour as widely as possible, and to attempt to keep compositions in the repertoire. While they will eventually look to reach beyond the jazz audience, the disappointingly small opening night crowd were largely Platform regulars, evident in their clapping after each movement rather than maintaining the polite — if cough-racked — silence of the classically trained audience. Francis Cowan's Sequences formed the second half of the concert, performed by a wind quintet, North Winds, and three jazz soloists on reeds, trombone and piano.

While there were good moments, the most disappointing aspect of this inaugural concert was how conventional it all was; the jazz especially never threatened to break any new ground. If the SJCG is to prosper as it deserves, it will surely have to convince listeners that it has more to offer than a course in the formal basics of their chosen forms. We await developments.

Kenny Mathieson



THESE CATS ARE SO HOT - AS YOU CAN SEE ABOVE - THEY REALLY ARE SMOKING' THE
masters of jive go under the title The Jazz Defektors, a lean quartet of singers and steppers backed
by a hard ensemble of post-funk musicians, and you can them at work in London's clubland - or
spot them in Julien Temple's newly released *Absolute Beginners*. Set highlight "Variety Is The Spice
Of Life" is still a *Wire* office singalong favourite.

ROUND UP THE USUAL SUSPECTS

by Biba Kopf

NOISE, THE way the French economist/critic Jacques Attali describes it, was the tremendous discord sounded through history by composers attempting to free themselves from the patronage of church, state and merchant bank. Their resistance to the demands of their patrons ruptured the order of things – harmony in other words – and, argues Attali, thereby prophesied broader social upheavals. Well, things are different in the 20th century. Today the order of things is the harmony of cash registers tinkling in time to the blithe whistling of musicians readily accepting their pigeonhole for the sake of greater returns. The one significant change is the locus of power from state to industry. The musician thus composes patterns of order in harmony with the industrial power that licences his or her right to exist and discord is sounded by those who do not fit in the economic order. The switch in power relations has thrown up the irony of composers whose work is considered non-commercial (therefore anti-social) once more seeking the state patronage their ancestors fought to free themselves from . . .

In Europe, the odd anomaly of the state supporting those artists who would seem to intend them most damage is commonplace. Possibly the most extreme example is the German Goethe Institute's support of Berlin noise supremos *Einstürzende Neubauten* as cultural ambassadors to USA and Japan. Their latter visit is the subject of 29-year-old Japanese director Sogo Ishii's brilliantly imaginative video exposition of the group's raison d'être, called *Halber Mensch*. The same director's feature film debut *Crazy Family* is a blackly hilarious transcription of a similarly destructive character to a domestic setting . . .

Whatever the ambiguous relation between makers and state, noise is commonly received as anti-state and anti-corporate. Its antithesis is muzak, the ultimate corporate-controlled and controlling tool; as such it's the target for abuse of the *Dredd* movie soundtrack. Not yet seen here, the German production, starring Neubauten's FM Einheit, satirically proposes civil uprising (Burgerkrieg) in hamburger junk food joints. The soundtrack's inverted muzak and high noise counts are its chosen modes of resistance . . .

Harmony is founded economically in the music industry's network of repetition, ie market conformity. The Berlin Dada group *Die Todliche Doris* (Deadly Dons/Deadly Dose) regularly confounds the network. Their releases have included a boxset of doll's records and a single accompanying a catalogue of natural catastrophes (a perfect correspondence between noise and nature's true face). Now here's their "commercial" record *Unser Debüt* (4). Capitulation? Not exactly. *Unser Debüt* is the component part of an invisible third LP that materializes only when the first is played simultaneously with a second, called *Sechs*, to be released shortly. Here, the network is truly ruptured, music is opened up for renewal and the mind is fucked as part of the bargain . . .



Jacques Attali: NOISE – The Political Economy Of Music (Manchester Press)
 Sogo Ishii: Crazy Family (*Obter*) and Halber Mensch (still not UK earlier)
 Decoder soundtrack (*What's So Funny About . . . German import*)
Die Todliche Doris: Unser Debüt (4) and Sechs (Atatak – German imports)
 (Records available from the usual import outlets.)

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BIG CITY BLUES BY SIMON JOSEBURY

TOURE KUNDA

THE SONG AND THE DRUM

By Mark Sinker

THE THREE TOURE BROTHERS HAVE utterly different voices, voices that couldn't be confused. But when they sing together en bloc, their sound blends so weirdly and exactly that they become one, one unmistakable African voice. They say you have to be brothers to be able to do that.

Toure Kunda are from the Casamance region of Senegal, a vocal trio who've formed a group in Paris to fit round their voices, and have carved out some considerable success in the last five years, with seven LPs and tours worldwide.

Ismaila, the oldest, talks for them, mostly. This may only be because his English is strongest — but it was he who made the first journey from Senegal to Paris to see what could be done there. So perhaps he's the nominal leader, although they never seem to appear except as an inseparable democratic threesome. Sixu speaks English a little more eratically, with his locks and his grin he balances his brother's bespectacled seriousness. Ousmane, the youngest, doesn't join us except to apologize haltingly that he has no English at all really. He wasn't part of the original Toure Kunda when they first started working, the singing Toure family were Ismaila, Sixu, and Amadou. Amadou collapsed and died at the Chapel des Lombards in 1983, during a performance, and Ousmane was called from Senegal to replace him.

Although he's been a pivotal part of the trio since, he still gives the impression of shyness off-stage and nervousness on. At least until he starts singing. Ismaila's voice is a rich and easy wail, Sixu's a light rasp. But Ousmane has one of those pure and sweet Moonsong voices that Mandingo culture luxuriates in. Their ambition and their problem is to put together a music that's modern and authentically Senegalese both, that appeals to the wider world without betraying their own personal, family and regional truths. With arranger Jean-Claude Bonaventure and more recently with producer Bill Laswell, they've had to find a way to clothe their music to attract outsiders that doesn't simply dispense with its most important or idiosyncratic features. Have they succeeded? Is it possible to keep the music Senegalese when you're using synthesizers?

"Yes," says Ismaila, simply. "Senegalese music is essentially based on rhythm and percussion, a lot of percussion, and a lot of melody lines too. But we know that in a lot of the world, most European countries think African music is only percussion. Of course we have three singers, three different voices, too much melody, and when we sing together, we sing in basically African rhythm, so to have a synthesizer or electric guitar or electric keyboard is just another new thing in African music."

THE BAND THEY'VE DRAWN ROUND

they are adept at a wide array of African and Afro-Caribbean rhythms not in the blandly reductive way that Afro-Latin fusions have always tended to be, but in ways that allow a naturally African blurring between rhythmic-frame and melody-style to be central and full and vital. The brothers all play percussion devices while singing — probably the two aspects aren't even considered separately. If there are occasional echoes of a band member's shady past in French Jazz-Rock, the richness of the songs tends to drive them right to the edge of the song. In fact, Bonaventure has a knack for arrangements that impact the heart of the tune and the spirit of the beat, and anything intrusive to that seems to evaporate off the surface of the listener's conscious attention.

They've been criticized for choosing Bill Laswell as a producer, but seem quite happy with the results themselves. "He is interested to know the matter with African music, and that's why we worked together. *Natalia* is our first contact with him, and we are satisfied anyway. So we think when we work with him a second time, he's going to know us quite well, and we can go one better."

So he didn't change your music?

"I think he didn't change nothing inside our music, but we didn't have so much percussion as we've had on other records, and I think that's why we say that for the next one we're going to know how to work it together very well..."

Laswell was criticized for encouraging them to desert their original sound, but this criticism seems to arise from a misunderstanding, and from the lack of availability of their work in Britain. The first record I heard was

constructed round solo and unison singing. It's true that the percussion was neglected, but its place in the show they go on from here to play shows that that neglect was only temporary, strategic.

I wonder if they have any idea what their Paris success might derive from?

"We were born in the south of Senegal, in the middle of three countries, Gambia, Sekou Toure's Guinea, and Guinees Bassau, and our country is a big market for all of these three countries. Inside our town you meet many kinds of language, many, many, and we sing in several African languages, nine African languages. Our father has five wives, and each of them speaks a different language, and we were born in this same home in the several languages. And we are three, and we play the roots music of each language."

So this cosmopolitan ambience, along with musician parents, has apparently given them the gift of getting across to those who don't even share one of their nine African languages. They compare themselves in this with their countrymen Youssou N'Dour, who sings only in Wolof, and whose music, mbalax, is consequently less rhythmically flexible. In addition to this, they don't come from a family of hereditary professional musicians, so that their freedoms of movement and response aren't hampered by a vast portage of family or paternal history and duty. It's possible their flexibility could lead to dilution — but up to now it seems that their background has left them more than capable of tackling and using cultural collision by barrier and trade-off: and they aren't strangers to the electricity of translation.

HAS AFRICAN MUSIC BEEN GIVEN THE RESPECT IT DESERVES?

"Well, we've given it respect for a long time, and I think it's going to give us more respect now."

A lot of music owes its all to an African root. People have been saying that for a long time now, but it's only since the studios reached the continent that it's begun to mean much more than abstract purity. Africa has its own voices now, not cartoon travesties or distant inherited echoes, but new and rising melodies with their own drive and their own logic and their own stories to sing, turning a face to the world as it is and as it changes.

Sixu puts it as well as anyone: "Like today we gonna play, but we don't know now how we're gonna make our music till we're at the place. When we arrive and begin, we fly in the music."

Discography

Toure Kunda (Celluloid Cell 6599)

Amadou-ids (Celluloid Cell 6646)

Casamance Au Clair De Lune (Celluloid Cell 6663)

Natalia (Celluloid Cell 6740)



Casamance Au Clair De Lune, their celebration of Senegalese traditions, for which they'd stripped their sound down to a more or less traditional base, the vocal and percussive bones: on the basis of this record alone, *Natalia* seemed a huge leap into some mid-Atlantic hi-tech pop fusion. But in fact it was *Casamance* that was the departure, and *Natalia* turns out to be more of a consolidation of a number of features they've developed through earlier records, the brighter sound, the ease and lightness of touch with a tangle of different rhythms, the excellent little tunes

LIVEWIRE

Chants and chains, chromatics and circles . . .

GEORGE RUSSELL ORCHESTRA

London, Logan Hall

A COLD TOWN, CERTAINLY, BUT momentarily a soul town, too. George Russell's first-ever London concert quickly disabused (maybe even disappointed) any who were expecting snowblind formality. There was nothing too cerebral about what he conducted at the Logan Hall. Product perhaps of his Scandinavian years, it was reminiscent of nothing more than a sauna, long passages of heat interspersed with brief cold plunges into the rhythmic and harmonic complexities we've grown to expect from him.

When you come over only once every 40-odd years, you need to do a little background. The first half had a slightly discursive feel, a retrospective of Russell's early work, complete with commentary. There was a reconstruction of "Cubana Be, Cubana Bop", the piece for the Dizzy Gillespie band that first made Russell's name. If the themes were originally Gillespie's, the wind-devil opening is (now) unmistakably Russell's, a foreshadow of the vertical rhythms that mark his more recent endeavours.

Then followed "All About Rose", a commission from Brandeis University where he briefly shared a composer-in-residence office with the unlikely likes of Gunther Schuller, Jimmy Giuffre and Malton Babbitt. It's ironic, doubly so given the good-natured swing of "Rose", that Russell should for so long have been seen as a jazz Babbitt, all intellect and no funk. On paper, he and his Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization can seem daunting, but as Bill Shankly used to say of football, music isn't played on paper. Russell is a player's composer first, a composer's composer only then.

The first half finished in a noisy tribute to his adopted city, "New York, New York", with Russell reciting Jon Hendricks' ode, got the soloists working overtime and built to a thundering rhythm and blues climax.

The main hour was "The African Game", Russell's musical reflections on the origins and fate of mankind. Divided into 11 'events', some very short and enigmatic – the already notorious electric pencil sharpener opening, unison rhythm on drums and xylophone, an extraordinary prolegomenon on tenor to something big that never happened – others open and infinitely extensible. The piece has no very restrictive programme and none of the rather literary ambitions of Mingus's similarly inclined "Pithecanthropus Erectus". It is, pre-eminently, a jazz composition in the fullest and most paradoxical sense, most successful when the gravity shifts most dramatically from composer to players. Even so, "Game" seemed more tightly reined than earlier pieces and there was no hint of false climax. It ends in a rippling, rocking rhythm that hangs over into the silence. The encore, a tribute to Miles, only diffused the mood.

The Anglo-American band tended to generate more heat than light. Russell's endless difficulties identifying his players seemed to prompt the odd bit of self-advertising. Palle Mikkelborg likes to do the whole Book of the Trumpet every time he stands up. Keith Copeland likes to thrash like namesake Stuart. Django Bates and Ashley Slater vied for the Edith Sitwell award for eccentricity (and played nothing very noticeable). Courtney Pine struts for effect ("Heading for a herma", as my gran says in her upper-case voice) but doesn't quite merit every ovation. Russell likes to mix in a few showmen; in this line-up only Kenny Wheeler looked a bit diffident (and was distinctly unhappy with the pencil-sharpener and the chants). Russell's no mean performer himself. None of your Mike Gibbs marks out of 10 glowering at solos. He struts like a dancing master, with more than a look of Merce Cunningham. As a conductor, he's an energizer and a catalyst and an unmistakable presence, which is what he's been in jazz for nigh on 40 years.

"What took you so long?" he wanted to know, and at the end a faint expression of surprise back and front of house. He's more of a swinger than we'd let ourselves believe. We're a lot happier to sit here, apparently, than they'd led him to believe back home. Max Harrison could have told us all year ago.

Brian Morton

EKAYA

London, Dominion Theatre

EKAYA'S LONDON DEBUT (A SOUTH Bank sequel) is promised this summer) must have surprised those familiar with Abdullah Ibrahim only as piano soloist, whether they consider him a sort of jumped-up Jarrett figure or one of the few cult heroes who hasn't compromised.

But this wasn't either of those. It was Ibrahim leading an American band, playing piano (and very well) with no unaccompanied piano spot and only a couple of solos within the septet, out of a two-hours-plus set. Of course, there was a piano presence underlining the restraint of the leader's two short vocals and during the two duets with Carlos Ward, one of which (the meditative "For Coltrane") used to open and close Ibrahim performances. Ward's occasional flute was less than profound, but he seemed a much improved alumnus since his first UK appearance at the Roundhouse in 1981, and nowhere was this more evident than in his lead work.

For one of the most impressive aspects of this concert was the convincing connections it made between Ibrahim's distinctive, not to say unique, harmonic/rhythmic style and the influence of Duke and Monk. And the frontline of three reeds and trombone (Dick Griffin) was full of voicings that recalled the Ellington

sax section or the ensemble on the *Mosaic's* *Music* session – with, surprisingly, a difficult, long-lined Mingus-type unison thrown in as the closing chorus of a piece which constantly changed key like a slower "Giant Steps".

Not that Abdullah himself banded names about as I'm doing. Announcements were almost non-existent and, outside of "Cape Town" from the *Ekaya* album and adaptations of a few Ibrahim standards, there was a lot of new material which it would have been nice to have identified. A pity too that the sober and be-suited demeanour of the band mirrored the actual playing of the rhythm-section (the drums of Don Mumford sounded promising, however, on the key-change piece). Baritonist Charles Davis, here for the first time in nine years, was generally disappointing but the rollicking Ricky Ford was the only soloist not to be sometimes inundated by the compositions.

Let's hope that *Ekaya* can continue to work together regularly, for they already have a strong identity far removed from any London-produced Afro-jazz. And surely now is the time for "South African jazz" to find a welcome in the United States.

Brian Priestley

STEVE ARGUELLES & DJANGO BATES: HUMAN CHAIN

Edinburgh Queen's Hall

YOUR INTREPID – BUT OFF-DUTY – reviewer ambles along to his usual Friday night rendezvous with Platform Jazz. On stage, the Clark Tracey Quartet blow some bop, with Guy Barker cooing some heavy solos out front, and a supple rhythm section shifting tempos around in fine style. Jimmy Deuchar's bebop "Suddenly Last Tuesday" finds a satisfactory set, but . . . there remains this "heard it all before" similarity, what has just happened is, more or less, exactly what he expected would happen . . .

When suddenly . . .

Two lunatics weave their way towards the stage through the unsuspecting punters. It is, it turns out, a metaphor for what is to come. Bates plays tenor horn, but we all know he is a pianist; it's a blind, but one he likes, for he does it again later. Organ is the thang tonight, though; organ, and fertile, powerful, inventive drumming, the double pulse driving this two-man big band on hypnotic rhythmic excursions, punctuated by Arguelles shifting down into a poignant, crashing counterpoint to Bates' night hawk's piano. The frenzied comic craziness of "Free" (asss dropped from a paper bag, any resonant metal object duly banged, or kicked around the stage) modulates into a bluesy solo behind Arguelles' demented threshing, prefiguring the shift into "Further Away," a floating, serene melody that gradually builds in a crescendo of accumulating power. That nothing is really



JAK KUTAY

Russell

quite what it seems is the essence of this performance; Human Chain are nothing if not eclectic, drawing on influences from soul to minimalism, Tom Waits to free jazz, and never, never quite doing what you expect with them, delighting in their subversion, revelling in their abilities, turning the two into a set that is simultaneously absurdly funny and impressively serious. No more objective description is going to catch the heart of this performance: your reviewer is grinning from ear to ear by the end, and heading for his typewriter . . .

Moral: if you want to blow the cobwebs away, catch this Human Chain.

Kenny Mathieson

THE MONKS OF GYU-ME TANTRIC COLLEGE

London Almenda Theatre

MANDALA AND WHEEL, THE CYCLE

and the zero: as they chant, this small group of

shy and placid men are inventing the universe around them. Dispensing with melody, beat, colour, or structure, their music is a zero-degree music: a residue, after centuries of sublimation, a thick grain, a long croaked murmur. Words repeated for more centuries by more mouths than can allow them to signify except purely formally – because what they must move towards meaning, or making, is Nothing, the No-Thought that precedes highest enlightenment.

"The sound of the bell," the translator advises us, "symbolizes emptiness. And its timbre symbolizes realization of emptiness." And its sound and its timbre (which can't of course be separated) are cracked, dulled, just as the drumming is random thud, and the blasts on these vast horns no more than dusty gouts of noise.

Western composers have been impressed by this tradition. John Cage, a kind of a Buddhist (but not this kind!) would have us listen as rapt to chairs scraping in the auditorium as to the performance they accompany. And

Stockhausen told us to attend the twin hum of the blood- and nerve-systems. But these are still art-objectives. To Tibetan Tantric ears, as pretty and as meaningless as bird-song, as is all music not shaped as vehicle for meditation. They'd shed the body and its alert senses, and flee the accident of the solid (illusive) world. And this music, which seems nothing if not physical, molecular, is being fashioned by concentration into pure symbol, with elaborate gestures, with felt helmets and wood crowns and calm expressions. Signs are empty of presence. A symbol is a figure with only one face, and that towards its user: nothing connects it with its object except the arbitrary human mind. A powerful lesson.

They slip out without acknowledging us, except perhaps a couple who nod minute bows to this world they would unpin. We wait till they've disappeared before we applaud.

Mark Sinker

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LIVEWIRE

TERRY RILEY

London, Logan Hall

IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF A sociologist wanting to do something useful for once, they could investigate the extremely diverse elements that make up the audience for music in a city such as London. After 40 years of intensive concert-going here I can still be surprised by the sharply contrasting bodies of people drawn by different occasions. Riley, making his London debut though now past the half-century mark himself, almost filled the Logan Hall with 1960s beards and their female equivalents. But the joke was that his work has come a long way since the cheapo trance music of *Mesacal Mex, It C* and so forth.

A central point about *The Harp Of The New Albion*, composed in 1984 and soon to be issued by Kuckuck Records, is that it uses a piano tuned to just intonation. There is no room to explain here – it is a characteristic of *Wire* that despite the amount of rubbish it prints there is never enough room to deal with important matters (*ax me, Max + Ed*) – but this yields results very different from the equal-temperament tuning that has been universally employed for keyboard instruments since the 18th century. Coarse fellows said that the piano merely sounded out of tune, but in fact its whole range of intervals sharper or flatter than the ear was expecting gave the music a refreshingly new aspect.

The programmatic side of *The Harp Of The New Albion* was detailed in the notes available at Riley's concert on February 17, which no doubt will reappear on the LP sleeve, and so will not be dealt with here. Its seven movements are mostly based on scales made available by the "new" tuning, and a considerable variety of unusual thematic material and treatments results. Thus the circle of the "Circle Of Wolves" movement refers not to animals but to the phenomenon of wolfing sometimes encountered in keyboard instruments and having to do with temperament and tuning. Riley employs three of these "wolf" or "howling" fifths, which, when they come together, produce extraordinary effects of unrest, dislocation. It is a further sign of the resources of just intonation that the two whole-tone scales used in "Ascending Whale Dreams" contain not one kind of whole-tone step, as in the equal-temperament tuning to which we are used, but three – one large (223 cents), one just "right" (203 cents) and one narrow (182 cents).

Riley still employs a fair amount of repetition, but is as far beyond the now-orthodox concepts of minimalism as Reich or Glass, if not further. A fluent pianist, he is also, unlike them, still interested in improvisation, and, as in his earlier music, the quality of sound, rather than any concept of thematic development, is the central issue. The nature of his sound material, even in a



NICK WHITE

Terry Riley, one just pianist and true

rather extreme case like the more aggressive movements of *The Harp Of The New Albion*, focuses attention, as the above comments should make clear, on acoustical properties, on microscopic changes in sound quality, on perceptual shifts. One is tempted to say that a whole new, or at least unfamiliar, area of music here opens before us. But, as with Akos Haba's fascinating quarter-tone music, the practical difficulties which arise with regard to the tuning of instruments are obvious.

MAX HARRISON

MANU DIBANGO

London Queen Elizabeth Hall

A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AGO, Charles de Lédesma suggested Dibango might be Africa's most important musician. Perhaps there's a few too many young Turks rising for that still to apply, but I'd settle for his being Africa's most undervalued musician. His roots would seem to be in Jazz, working from Big Band through Free to Funk, but his music isn't really Jazz. At present it seems to be unique to him, in fact. And live performance provides its most thorough remark. His records are only rarely more than exercises in absorption of new styles and angles. His Electro work (which started, incidentally, on *Santosian*, and before he met Laswell) should be seen in light of this: *Electric Africa* sees him teaching himself to use it, but he doesn't use any of those songs tonight. Maybe they'll appear later.

His stage work manifests a density that the records lack, when traces and shafts of all his

experiments are let loose to smash across and through each other, with extraordinary complexity and clarity (one or other would not be so unlikely; it's the two together that make him so special). He faces his hits with warning cross-currents, and their remaining unity is just him, stalking quietly across the stage. His band are perfectly flexible, they play what he throws them, they function as one; his contributions are often no more than sporadic interjection, a gruff spoken chorus, some tiny tune, a deliberately undeveloped sax solo that smears a few edges before hushing. The songs are elaborately constructed, nutty jazz-rock charts, but deconstructed by long use, and random shifts, and the ghosts of contradictory direction. The others solo, but as part of the sound: their personality is strictly collective. Jerry Malekani and Vincen Nguiye on lead and doubled soukous guitar, Francis Mbappe on bass, Bruce Ouassy on drums, Abu Bo on percussion, Justin Colbert on drums, Florence Tirry and (I think) Sisay Dipoko his lithe and essential chorus: most of them have travelled far with him, the sense is certainly that they're relaxed and alert in company of his music.

Perhaps it seemed a touch too long? But all that was was that a seated audience weren't able to return him the full response needed to drive his music our beyond its initial level, so that this level became a plateau. He's too old and wise to wear himself out seeking huge recognition, now, content to explore music at his own pace, happy to voice Africa in the most modern accent.



KNIGHTS AT THE TURNTABLE

NICK COLEMAN MEETS FIVE MEMBERS OF THE SELECT FRATERNITY WHO CHAMPION THE CAUSE OF SPINNING JAZZ RECORDS TO A NEW PUBLIC.

IT'S A REASONABLY SAFE BET THAT if you're reading this magazine then you have a serious interest in music, that you buy records, go to concerts, talk about music, that it infests at least a part of the quodlibia of ordinary life. Nor are you exempt if you are of musically inclined. Each and every one of us who declares an interest must be, perforce, A Consumer.

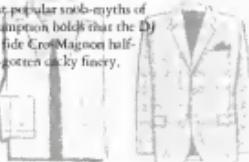
The temptation is there to hide from the vulgarity of such a notion. Music, we learn, is a transcendental thing, the stuff of abstraction and purity of spirit, a place where emotion, sensation, sentence are joined in a holy language. Indeed, if it didn't at least partially fulfill such conditions, then music would lose its special appeal, being no more useful than a packet of tea or toilet paper. Music is important because it is more than functional.

But music is also inextricably linked with the world of the functional because it is a product of people who drink tea and defecate; who talk, fuck, fight, and eat digestive biscuits. Music is *about* those things. It's as clogged up with images as it is with sounds, as addled with reasoning words as it is with incoherent screams. Music's tactile elements influence not the way it sounds, *but the way we hear it*. Records are interesting objects, as are tenor saxophones and television sets; a hair-cut is attached to the same appendage as a trumpeter's bruised lip. Miles Davis plays fine trumpet, but he also talks tough and wears great clothes.

In one sense music is a continuum. At the nearest point on that continuum there is We The Listener, the consumer; at the most distant point, that extraordinary, imponderable moment of conception when feeling and thought conjoin to make the holy language. Between us and that holy moment lies the machinery by which this language reaches us. Functional machinery (recording studios, hi-fi, concert halls, saxophones), imagistic machinery (bodies, cloths, record sleeves) and, informing the lot, social machinery (race, class, culture, psychology). Under certain conditions, somewhere along that continuum — like that point in evolution where *homo sapiens* diverged from the ape lies an individual we coyly call the Disc Jockey. Happily invading all three sections of the music machine, the DJ is a mediator, a cog and, in some cases, an artist.

Yet one of the most popular stools-myths of "serious" music consumption holds that the DJ is, in fact, your bona fide Cro-Magnon half-wit, be-decked in ill-gotten tacky finery, transfixed by his own ego like it were a penis-extension.

That most DJs are male there is no doubt, and from that fact



you can draw your own conclusions (I had fixed up an interview with a prominent female DJ, but she withdrew from the arrangement too late to find a replacement). Like many musicians, music-writers, and football hooligans, a reasonable proportion of DJs are half-written, but the good ones have one thing in common: commitment.

COLIN CURTIS IS ONE OF THE ELDER

statesmen of the northern club scene, even in his early thirties. He is a self-confessed vinyl junkie and bears all the physical attributes of the true ascetic: tall, thin and pale, with corrugated-iron cheek-bones and eyes that crackle with dangerous enthusiasm whenever a favourite subject is broached.

A veteran of the Blackpool Mecca ("a black music mecca" that avowed a "Northern Soul attitude"), he began to play jazz in the mid-70s, "sneaking in music by the Jeff Lorber Fusion ["The Samba" off *Soft Space* is a classic of the fusion dance genre], the CTI and Kudu labels, plus some Brazilian rhythms". Gradually he evolved an "elite last-hour policy" during which he would play this music exclusively, at the same time ingratiating the idea into a Northern Soul clique quite prepared to move to anything that bore the indelible mark of exclusivity.

It was (and is) a scene in which backstreet elitism, the hierarchy of the underground meant everything. The most prominent clubs in the 70s - The Twisted Wheel in Manchester, The Torch in Tunstall, Wigan Casino, Blackpool Mecca - acquired mythic status, the hubs for a sub-culture that viewed Obscurity as a prime virtue (the more arcane the record, the greater its cache) and considered southern obsequity to consensus taste in clothes and music to be barely worthy of contempt.

"The excitement was all about records that you wouldn't hear about in the normal run of things. Also the diversity of that music and the fact that it was all underground - sort of a secret."

By 1978 Curtis was playing his jazz/latin sounds regularly in Manchester. He was also fully integrated into the DJ set; not so much a social scene as a communications network: "The DJ scene survives on a telephone network that nobody knows about. Nobody'd realize the politics, rumours, backstabbing that goes on in the network of cliques. I'm in regular contact with London DJs as well as northern ones, but once the phone's gone down I dread to think what's said." He laughs slyly.

The much-publicized London club scene with its hyped DJs and professional Fabs is only an extension of a phenomenon that began long ago in the north west and Midlands, and still it lags behind in terms of musical taste - the basic raw material, the DNA if you like, of northern club existence. Curtis is eager to point out that Earl Grant's "House Of Bamboo" - "one of our classics" - is now a belated rave in London.

"With me, at any rate, it's all about music, developing musical taste. It's almost a cliché, but the biggest buzz for me - replacing shots in the arm, tablets down the throat - is watching people turn on to a record they've never heard before."

Now he's running a regular jazz night on Mondays at the Berlin club in Manchester

"Berlin has a healthy attitude towards music. You get your fresher students with the big coat and hair-cut jumping up and down next to a trendy black kid who's giving it all the aerobics and bally . . . Jazz attitudes, the middle-aged stigma that life's got so boring that you need something abstract to hang on to, that's so unsociable. A lot of the kids might not know about Art Farmer or Sonny Stitt or any of the people who turn up in Manchester to play at The Band On The Wall. What we're trying to do is give those kids an awareness, to wrap it all up in a club situation, in a way that's familiar. Once they have access to the music then they get into it properly on their own terms, developing their own taste and knowledge. Look, in the next decade there's going to be a new, better attitude towards jazz."

THE WORD "ATTITUDE" CROPS UP AN awful lot in Colin Curtis's conversation. It's a sign of both fierce morality and an insistent refusal to separate music from its social dimension. He has a reputation.

Baz Fe Jax is a long-time admirer of that "attitude" and numbers Curtis as a former "idol". A more than familiar face on the London and Midlands club scenes, Baz's hat and beard preside over turntables in Birmingham, Nottingham's Rock City and, as half of the Take 5 team, at London's Sol Y Sombra and Wag clubs. He can also be heard on the somewhat patchy pirate radio station K-Jazz and is the organiser of several highly successful jazz all-nighters at the Scala cinema in King's Cross ("the aim is to unify north and south - have a big family get-together"). Baz is a trained dancer, which was how he made his entry into Curtis's kingdom, but gave it all up for dingy dives and double decks. His taste is basically for all things latin - particularly but u cada - but he leaves his spicy mix with dollops of danceable jazz.

His Take 5 partner McConnell, a 20-year-old motor-mouth from Dagenham, has the more straight-ahead taste, naming Hank Mobley's *Diggin' and Roll Call* as favourite albums. Between them, they are a garrulous source of rhetoric and tales from the underground: of massively successful warehouse parties in Rotherhithe ("People was paying money to walk two feet from the entrance"); of scene morality ("I don't want to be hyped. I like this level where I'm in touch with people. It's important that the thing remains underground anyway, 'cos as soon as it's hyped up it dies"); of personal woes ("We're proving that Paul Murphy ain't the only one who can do it").

Andy explains to me about the establishment DJ structure - The Mafia and its regular get-togethers at Caister and (newly) Bogno:

"Well, with the Mafia scene you gotta read *Blues & Soul* and follow the Godfather (Chris Hill) around. If he says lie on your backs, everybody lies on their backs. If he says wave your legs in the air, everybody waves their legs in the air. It's pathetic. And then the Mafia plays Cliff Richard's 'Summer Holiday' and everybody goes 'Oh, what larf!' I mean, what the fuck has that got to do with music? You open *Blues & Soul* and you see a picture of a bird with her tits hangin' out, a geezer with a jockstrap on, I ask you! There's people walking

around dressed up like DUCKS!"

A bit like Burlies

"A bit like Burlies tamed. The highlight of their week in the jazz room at Caister'd be a tune entirely average for us. They play Carmen McCrae's 'Take Five' and they flip. Here, with us, that's just another record."

Andy is equally voluble about why it is that large youthful crowds appear at club venues like The Wag to see bands they might well catch in other places

"The trouble with Ronnie Scott's is, after you've paid ten quid to get in, you get a load of Americans having a big meal, bottles of wine, getting pissed and then talking and shouting while you're trying to listen to the band. Then there's your élitists sitting there all serious and clapping politely and talking about it. The atmosphere's just not there. Down our place, if you get a feeling you express it through dancing rather than just sitting about."

STEVE EDWARDS IS THE ONLY ONE

of our sample who doesn't make a living from being a DJ ("It's all very cut-throat. It can be a question of who you know, not what you know"). Also, he is primarily a radio DJ, delivering a professional-sounding and engagingly ingenious jazz programme on the pirate LWR (London Weekend Radio). He makes a healthy living as a manager in the insurance industry and his conversation is larded with the vocabulary of personal endeavour.

"Jazz musicians try and put a personal concept into their music. I, as a DJ, try to put through a personal concept in the music that I play. It's a great challenge. But the DJ is also an intermediary, just helping to pass the original concept of the music on. What tends to happen is the old 'Look at me, I'm Mr DJ. Haven't I a great voice, aren't I sexy. Oh, and by the way, here's Miles Davis,' which is terrible. But I do need to put on a bit of a performance."

He grew up in an age where the notion of the disc jockey as a performer was a highly developed one. Established radio jazz presenters like Peter Clayton certainly didn't . . .

"Oh yes. That's why a younger audience can identify more with me. But don't forget, you're listening to the radio party for information. You don't want that overridden by someone whose first concern is with their ego. You're looking for a compromise, a balance between excitement and information."

Edwards is enthusiastic about the pirate ethos, its lumpen, spontaneous air of off-the-wall near-chaos. "Pirate presentation can be so raw, which makes a nice change. It's better than everything sounding the same, isn't it?" But he has serious and well-founded doubts about whether the government will come up with the promised franchises for properly independent stations.

"THERE'S TOO MANY VISTED interests," insists Dave Hacker, eclectic DJ at the Sol Y Sombra and Round Sound At Bay 63 in West London. "The major culprit is the IBA, in my opinion, who don't want to see the power of the airwaves disseminated beyond the few who've got it at the moment. It's the same old story. The government should say to the IBA that their role is out-dated they've got to

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PACIFIC DAYS

RICHARD COOK PUTS ON HIS WALKIN' SHOES, GOES BACK TO THE
50's RECORDS BY THE GERRY MULLIGAN QUARTET AND TENTETTE
AND DISCOVERS AFRESH WHAT HAPPENED AT A LITTLE CLUB
CALLED THE HAIG.

GERRY MULLIGAN ALWAYS LOOKED to me like he must have been one of life's tougher customers. Photographs of the young Mulligan seem to carve him out, like a solid block, against a club or studio background: the hair swept and frizzling in slight permutations of the crew cut, the long chalky forehead, a chin that juts out defiantly under the hooked neck of the horn.

He'd lean back against the weight of the big old baritone sax, the instrument slung round his neck on a huge strap. Mulligan looked lean and unsmiling and implacable. It was a cool look — for a horn whose bulk and sonic heft needed a determined counterweight.

The first Mulligan record I ever heard was a track from the Pacific Jazz/Capitol sessions, now reissued complete for the first time by Mosaic. It was "Nights At The Turntable", on one of those old Vogues with the temperate black and red labels. What I heard was four men playing in a style that seemed to methodically smelt down a passion to play: the music was cooling as it came out, played at a stroll but possessed by a darkly smoky feel.

The drummer played with brushes, the bassist walked the length of the pound, and the trumpet

and baritone paced out a grave but athletic counterpoint. The melody — I'm humming it now — was one of those stop-start things that Mulligan can transform into a flow without any stumbling, even though it should hardly hang together at all; by turns, it's punty, quizzical, a little sad. And the players turn it over in their instruments — Mulligan's solo is bumpy, the trumpeter's — Chet Baker's — is pinchily lyrical. There's a beautiful little tag at the end, as there is on many of the records they made.

Today, it sounds like a period picture — the bosey grain of the recording dates it to its early 50s birthday at once — yet it also sounds adult from age. It was recorded by very young men, and their taste for a calmly burning music is one of the persistent sparks that keeps jazz from growing old. It's bewildering how such apparently simple and watery music has held on to that spark for three decades and more.

The records are so light and fresh and vital, floating even at the slowest moments, invigorating even at their most melancholy, and they're one of the few areas of jazz recording where a formula was repeated persistently without the master becoming matter-of-fact.





Rev Mulligan flips the congregation – from *The Sullivans* (stills courtesy National Film Archive).

It's a doddling cliché to say that you keep discovering new things, but listening to "Nights At The Turntable" again I notice Mulligan's touchy dialogue with Baker changing as the tune goes on. I hear how the notoriously absent piano would have spoilt the whole thing; how the basses changes his line, fractionally, at a couple of moments to make a useful fraction of a difference. If I'd heard all that before, well, I'd forgotten. These aren't monuments of genius, like Armstrong's Hoe Seven or Parker's Savoys, but as a group of records they share an affinity with the spirit of those sessions.

MULLIGAN WAS 25 WHEN HE formed the quartet with Baker, but he'd already piled up plenty of jazz experience. He wrote five arrangements for Miles Davis' *Birth Of The Cool* band in 1949. "Jeri," "Rocker" and "Venus De Milo" were unexpected originals, the work of a green but ambitious and self-willed composer. In 1951, he recorded with another large group for Prestige; the results, on *Mulligan Plays Mulligan*, are witty and unspeakably fully-formed. The gift that Mulligan has is clear even at this stage: as he has continued to advance, he's stayed quite the same. He writes and swings and alights on things in just the same way as he's always done.

The important (and now often forgotten) scores of 1951 show one of the two paths Mulligan worked at in this period. There are ten musicians, which was about as much of a big band as most people could afford then (and times didn't change that much), and Mulligan concentrated the sound of the group in a rich middle-weight depth — no alto but two baritones, three brass and the major voicings coming out of the reed section. The trumpets were mostly called to work self-effacingly in the lower registers.

The music acts as both a vehicle for Mulligan the soloist and a direct big-scale extension of his own manner of ensemble playing. Incredibly, the band frequently resembles ten Mulligans on song, whatever instruments they're playing. Few arrangers have gripped a group so tightly in their own identity: "Idle's Side" and "Funhouse" are laconic swingers; "Roundhouse" is a little bit haughty, and Allen Eager's leathery tenor kicks the score open for a moment.

Still, individual discussion seems pointless, for in a way these scores are all of a singular piece — the textures are dark without excessive weight, the sectional cross-talk which sustained the swing bands is eclipsed and a new sparseness matches up with melodic vim. This isn't as diversely characterful as the Davis scores, although it's all completely Mulligan — it's more straight-ahead than a Miles project could ever be. But if this was different to the Birth Of The Cool, it proved to be a closer relation to the music that dominated the cool players in the decade ahead. It comes to a peak in the tremendous "Bweebida Bobbida", a big-throated theme that seems to get hotter and hotter without — if you'll pardon the suggestion — losing its cool.

The Hug was a tiny club in Los Angeles. A photograph by Bill Claxton shows what looks like a beach hut in the shade of an apartment block. Dodges and Packards asleep just

outside. In the summer of 1952, Red Norvo was playing the werknight slot at the club while Gerry Mulligan bossed the Monday night gig, usually with an ad hoc grouping. In June he met the 22-year-old Al Cohn Baker at the club, they began to work as a regular front line, and Mulligan found that the sound of the two horns thrived on the bright simplicity of bass and drums alone. Sensationally — well, this was 1952 — he kept the quartet free of a pianist.

They made eight sides for Fantasy and 25 studio sides for Pacific Jazz, a new label that made its start with this band. Inside a few months, they came to be something of a national jazz phenomenon, although the music was hardly the stuff of tabloid headlines. It was just one of those good timings, perhaps; but for all the fortune that seemed to attend the Mulligan band, its music has lasted extremely well.

There are plenty of reasons to pick out. Mulligan clearly didn't design this as some kind of hot band: it moved logically on from the first explorations of his big band writing, a scaled-down prime, using small, deft gestures and long linear improvisations in a music that would be conservative after the exploding passions of bebop but insinuating and thoughtful and progressive. He could play ideas off one another or fuse them to gain extra strength — the trumpet and baritone might intertwine, or play call-and-response, or even fashion a three-part harmony with the bassise.

Mulligan was no slouch, but he probably didn't have the baritone facility of Serge Chaloff, and Baker was scarcely a virtuoso, so he made technical imperatives inconsequential by keeping the tempos steady. And his choice of material was irresistibly catchy: novelty pop like "Frenesi" and "Carioca", clever originals like "Park For Barkdale" and "Walkin' Shoes" and quality standards like "Takin' A Chance On Love" — all played for not much over the customary single-side duration. There wasn't the space to lose interest.

What Mulligan couldn't have expected was the startling success that developed beyond a cult club attraction. Perhaps it was just the sound of the group that was so attractive, the strange and languorous marriage of Baker's flushed trumpet and the booming Mulligan with the airy skip of Chico Hamilton's brushes and Jeff Whitlock's bass. Na Hentoff's astute observation bears repeating: "It stimulated listeners to hear more sensitively, more sophisticatedly. With the pianist gone, it was instructive, and at times rather exhilarating, to realize how far you the listener could stretch your own ears as you were drawn into the Mulligan microcosm."

AND THOSE LISTENERS BOUGHT enough of the Mulligan Quartet's Pacific Jazz records to keep the label afloat. The sides they cut in October 1952 were a close-written chapter on two styles that have hardly changed since. There is the careful-sounding Mulligan, big and cheerful, who lopes diligently into his solos and delivers them in phrases that are shrewdly complete — it's hard to remember a Mulligan solo once it's gone. You recall the heartbeat regularity of his swing and the amiable tumble of phrases, and that's about all; it's the skull (or failing, to your taste) endemic to those players who were called

"West Coast".

Then there is Chet Baker, the almost-doomed young man with the looks and the pretty sound to match. After all the scathing talk about Baker's bumbling that seems to have come down the years, it's surprising to hear how confident he sounds a lot of the time. On his own speedy "Freeway" he negotiates the turns without much of a problem; his tone is so boyishly sweet-saturated that "My Funny Valentine" was the only theme tune he could ever have had. The counterpoint he works with Mulligan on "Nights At The Turntable" and that little masterpiece "Walkin' Shoes" — which functions as a novelty tune, a play on a particular rhythm and even a kind of blues satire — is as telepathic as any of the great combinations in jazz.

Baker's middle range is his strength, and he flickers constantly around that register. It's not so different to what Don Ayler did with his brother Albert, for instance, buzzing perpetually on a small cluster of notes to throw the bigger sound of the saxophone into a finer relief.

As the group went on recording, they didn't exactly get more adventurous; instead they refined a few ideas, smoothed out any bumps in the flow and gradually eased themselves into the idea of *just playing*. The leader has a memory that gives you the idea: "I remember one night at The Hug . . . nobody called a tune all evening. As a tune ended, someone would noodle with another melody, and we would all go into the same thing. We'd play for an hour and a half that way, take a break and go on and do it again. It never let up. It was one of the most exciting evenings of playing I can remember."

Freedom is just around the corner: with chords pared down to a skeleton by the sound of the group — in essence, a tripartite stream of melody — no wonder that they sometimes seemed on the brink of something else. In a few records, it almost comes clear: "Carson City Steag" is nearly a modal tune, the structure of pieces like "Festive Minor" becomes secondary to the serene flight of playing. Their approach to standard themes became wayward. The March 1953 recording of "All The Things You Are" seems to be a challenge to the bebop anthem: the Tristamites had appropriated it and made it abstract, but they went no further than Mulligan did in his reading — the melody scarcely seems to breathe, and the saxophonist does his best to twist away from it.

The nine tunes that the quartet recorded live at The Hug in May 1953 bring the little studio miniatures to life, although the differences are matters of feel rather than form. The longest piece, "Get Happy", is less than six minutes in duration; nobody begs to "jam". The music dispels any nonsense that Baker couldn't play — listen to the tight/he loose on "Five Brothers", skimming notes well out of his normal range and not bothering to falter. Though one might expect this music to be more laid back outside the studio, it's actually snappier — even the ballads, particularly a rather skulking "I Can't Get Started", sound tense. "My Funny Valentine" is played with great dramatic nous by Baker — this is chaste, not chaste. Nobody breathes after he quits, and Mulligan picks up the melody without a murmur, gently beginning to push

ERRY MULLIGAN



it offshore. These players weren't supposed to be much good at this sort of desolation of the heart; but Chet and Gerry knew about junk, as well as about critics and girls.

IT WAS A PRIVATE WORLD THIS
music came out of, and it couldn't last too long. A clue to its fragility came in the three sessions that almost Lee Konitz sat in on, one at The Haig, two in the studio. Konitz was the brilliant young scholar among Tristano's pupils, and his acidulous sound and exceptional technique was of a different order to that of Mulligan and Baker. On some of the tunes, like "Too Marvelous For Words" and "Lover Man", the group operates as little more than a backdrop to Konitz's quite stunning

improvisations — if he was a less persuasive player than the others, he left no doubt about his fluency and imagination. It was like a slightly higher syntax of the language that Mulligan had patiently put together. But it broke into their realm like a pickaxe.

On the final studio date for Pacific, there's some indication of the three working out a comparability. Everybody has an equal shout in "I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me" and "Lady Be Good", and the springheel unisons in the latter are the kind of arranger's snippet that Mulligan had become so good at. Even so, the mood of this last music is the sort that precipitates changes, a matter of going public.

As it turned out, Mulligan had six months

of narcotics trouble and Baker went to form his quartet with Russ Freeman. On his return, the baritone put together a new quartet with valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer. Was it the same? Their Paris concert set (*The Fabulous Gerry Mulligan Quartet*) hasn't quite the intimacy of the sides with Baker, but Mulligan seems wholly unperturbed. His solos on "Lullaby Of The Leaves" and "Soft Shoe" — the latter must be the fastest Mulligan has ever played — grouch around the same territory he did before, he finds the same reasons to be exhilarated or thoughtful or moody in his music. He simply carried on, as most of us do.

This course took him through meetings with Stan Getz, Paul Desmond, Thelonious Monk and Johnny Hodges and past other quartets and big bands: Mulligan has recorded frequently and worked steadily, as Leo Feather reported last issue. Twenty-five years after they worked at The Haig, he played with Chet Baker again at the somewhat bigger venue of Carnegie Hall: men wizened by time, this was a star-crossed reunion. But it was much the same Gerry Mulligan.

The music of his quartets and tenteties in the early 50s has endured much as Mulligan himself has. Maybe some of the saxophonist's pugnacity rubbed into those records: if they still sound light and fresh, they've got a sinewy interior that makes you take the music more seriously than posterity might otherwise allow. "Nights At The Turntable" should have dated as much as Hawaiian beach shirts and rumble seats; but it hasn't. Whether he thought about it or not, Mulligan made this music to last.

NOTES

Most of the sides cited above are available as part of *The Complete Pacific Jazz And Capitol Recordings Of The Original Gerry Mulligan Quartet And Tentet With Chet Baker* (Mosaic MR5-102), available as a five-disc set on import or direct from Mosaic at 197 Strawberry Hill Avenue, Stamford, Connecticut 06902 USA. *Mulligan Plays Mulligan* is reissued on OJC 003. *The Fabulous Gerry Mulligan Quartet* is on Vogue VJD 504.

CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL

by Max Harrison

LOOK, MA, NO HANS

THE TITLE *SINFONIETTA* SEEMS LIKELY TO be the only boring aspect to a Channel 4 series that in fact shows every sign of effecting a genuine breakthrough in the presentation of good music on tv. Such things are normally done without imagination. Either the cameras explore the faces of the performers one by one, as if hoping to winkle out somebody who is required to help the police in their enquiries. Or else a ghastly pedant such as the late, resoundingly unlamented Hans Keller states blandly out of the screen, explaining how much better he understands the piece in question than we do. For a change, *Sinfonietta*, which runs weekly from April 13 at 8.15pm, gets well away from tv studios, as in the last programme of the series, "Everywhen", which uses Ayer's Rock in central Australia as the setting for Varese's *Jarigata*.

These six programmes are by five different directors, ensuring considerable diversity of approach, and a start is made with "A Universal Singing", wherein are thoughts about how we hear everyday sounds like Ives's *Three Places In New England* and Webern's Five Orchestral Pieces Op.10. "Ghosts", the second programme, includes a hauntingly masked performance of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*. "Labyrinth" features Berg's Chamber Concerto, itself indeed a musical labyrinth, an expressionist maze yet one that is organized with relentless precision. Gymnasts and contortionists appear in Stravinsky's early farm-yard burlesque, *Reward*, a sort of chamber cantata accompanied by stage action in mime. In the fifth programme London's futuristic Triton Court provides the superimposed stages of Messiaen's *Couleurs De La Cité Céleste*. All this will be played by the London Sinfonietta, which goes some way towards excusing the title.

MERLIN'S MARIMBA

BUT WE MUST NOT SPEND ALL OUR TIME huddled over the box. It is essential to get out there among the violins, bass trombones, ring-modulators and even marimbas of live new music. As it happens, there is that rarity, a solo marimba recital at the Purcell Room on April 2. Besides Steve Reich's *Versus/Contempore* William Muench offers the British première of Richard Rodney Bennett's *After Syros II*, Andrew Thomas's *Merlin*, Yoshihisa Taira's *Convergence I*. Which last reminds us that two days later in the Purcell Room the Japanese Music Pool, in the second of their "Rays of the Rising Sun" series, presents some more Japanese and Japanese-influenced pieces,



again mainly UK premières. These include Kazuo Fukushima's *Mai*, Hikaru Hoyashi's *Twilight Songs* and Vagn Holmboe's Flute Sonata.

FORWARD WITH FOUGSTEDT

YOU GET FEW CHANCES OF HEARING the Abo Academy Choir from Turku, directed by Gottfrid Grasbeck, but this popular Finnish group will be at St John's, Smith Square, on April 5, with pieces by Aulis Sallinen, Nils-Erik Fougstedt, Jukka Kankainen, Olli Koertekangas and the British première of Erik Bergmann's *Tiptaka Suite*. The next St John's happening, on April 7, will be Canadian, with the Redcliffe Chamber Orchestra giving the UK premières of Jean Coulthard's *Prayer For Elizabeth*, Ann Southam's *Wave*, and the world première of Violet Archer's *Divertimento*. Those interested in the activities of women composers may note that the last was composed especially for this concert. Further Canadians turn up at Canada House on April 14, when Lawrence Charney, an exponent of the oboe, performs Jacques Hétu's *Imitation*, Jean Piché's *Slayt Of Hand*, Larry Lake's *Psalm* and John Beckwith's congenial *Arctic Dances*.

MESSIAEN AND MINNESANG

LAST JANUARY OPUS 20, A NEW STRING ensemble conducted by Scott Stroman, made a promising debut at St John's, and they are back on April 17 with the British première of a rather intense Suite by Lou Harrison (no relation of this column), the world première of Jan Bach's *Music For 13 String*; and there will be a new piece by Stroman himself. A day later at St John's Bayan Northcott bobs up again,

this time with the BBC Singers giving the world première of his *Hyper To Cyde*. They follow it with the UK première of Emmanuel Nunes' *Minnesang* and Messiaen's wonderful *Cinq Richesses*. Meanwhile, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on April 20 the London Rapsodia Orchestra and Singers offer their interpretation of Geoffrey Hanson's *Sinfonia Amoris*. This is described as "exploring the nature of love", which does not sound too unpromising.

DIK EN DUN

24 HOURS LATER AT THE BRITISH MUSIC Information Centre Getrada Bouwhuis is at the piano for a Sonata by Sackman, John Taverner's *Psalm*, and the British premières of Huub Emeren's *Stukken* and *Dik En Dun* by Guus Jansen (once sighted at the Actual Music Festival). That same evening, however, not a million miles away at the Wigmore Hall, the cellist Janet Horvath gives the world première of Libby Larsen's *Jala*, subtitled "19th-Century Slave Dance". Even if this was "commissioned with funds provided by the Schubert Club of St Paul, Minnesota", it may contain some faint echo of Congo Square in dear ole N'Orlins. Infinitely remote from such venues, though, is Renée Renéz's Wigmore Hall programme on April 22, which offers the complete piano works of the Second Viennese School. In other words this unmissable recital consists of Schoenberg's Piano Pieces Opp.11, 19, 23, 33, the Suite Op.25, Berg's Sonatas and Webern's Variations.

BO'S BASS

METANOIA MAKE A PRETTY GOOD SCENE (if I may anticipate this magazine's forthcoming Beatnik issue) at the Purcell Room on April 26. Besides a new realization of Stockhausen's *Turkis*, there is the world première of Jonathan Impett's *Cassation* and Martin Butler's *Hawmingbird*, the UK première of Michael Levinas's *La Rose Du Giller*, and a performance of John Cage's Concert for Piano 'n' Orchestra. Then back, finally, to St John's on April 28 for the English Brass Ensemble (formerly the Albany Brass Ensemble). *The Devil's Picture* by Edward Shipley ought to be worth looking at, and there will be a piece by the saxophonist John Harle called *Miles And Miles*. Not forgetting Bo Nilsson's *Bass* for amplified tuba, six tuned gongs and tom-tom, or something called *Rabbit Hauser* by Tim Souster. This last was commissioned with "funds from the Arts Council", which, of course, is code for "taxpayers' money".

Z W E R I N

Rockin' At Les Bains

LES BAINS, NEAR ARTS AND METIERS, once a public bath house, has long been a chic place where the spike-haired set eats upstairs, boogies downstairs, and drinks everywhere speaking of Twisted Sister and The Alarm. It is a place above all to be seen.

Rumour has it that the word "jazz" had never been spoken at Les Bains until an energetic disc jockey, journalist, saxophonist, AACM fan and man-about-town named Sir Ali began booking drumless jazz-oriented pop, or pop-oriented jazz, depending on your perspective, on Monday and Tuesday nights late last year. He describes the style as "Not Much Noise", after the name of a band I once had. (We recently reviewed a record of this band, misprinting it "Too Much Noise", but that's another story.) (Get on with it — Ed.) Erik Satie called this sort of sound "furniture music".

The series is officially billed as "The White Elephant" (L'Elephant Blanc) and goes from 10 pm until the disco picks up after midnight. It started with a lot of empty tables but the elephant has been growing panker as an illogical assortment of hitherto invisible musicians began to filter out of the hills. They had been hiding out in country bands, behind unspeakable variety singers, playing guitars disguised as David Crosby in metro stations.

For years there's been more of a "scene" in Paris than meets the ear. Hearing original music depends on word of mouth. There's no circuit or schedule. A few months ago, Steve Lacy played a solo gig at the Dunoir in the wilds of the 13th arrondissement accompanying a clown. Gil Evans happened to be in town and I never would have known about it if he hadn't told me. It takes Gil Evans to come to Paris to find out what's happening.

There is currently an ambitious festival called "Banlieues Blues" (Suburban Blues) going on in rather depressing peripheral places impossible to find or get home from without a bebop chauffeur. Marion Brown with Mal Waldron in Le Bourger, Stephane Grapelli in Clichy-Sous-Bois, The Willem Breuker Kollektief in Blanck-Mesnil, Salif Keita in Pantin, Ray Lema in Tremblay-les-Gonesse. These towns sound like what they are, the concerts take place in union halls and Communist Party cultural centres, they can start late or be cancelled at the last minute — they do not easily tempt you away from a cooing hearth or a warm body in bed on a snowy night.

Sir Ali is trying to establish a centrally located place you can count on no matter who's there. That is, you count on his taste, and if that fails on the ambience.

HE'S BUILDING AN INTERESTING

core band around the talented bassist, synthesist and singer-songwriter Marten Ingle. Ingle is a star waiting for someone with the right lens to put him in focus. He studied jazz bass with Buell Neidlinger, classical composition at Cal-Arts and was a repairman for the Oberheim synthesizer company, which makes him comfortable with just about any material from Prez's "Tickletoe" to Prince's "1999". Like a whore who enjoys making love, Marten tends to give it away, jamming all over town and playing any style for little or no money for the fun of playing, rather than looking to marry a sugar daddy. He had his gas turned off last month.

When he was even broker than that, he once scuffled into London and did carpentry work around the Eurythmics' church when the demo he went for fell through. He described to me, with considerable pathos, how he was in the rafters with hammer and nails looking down on Dave Stewart and Bob Dylan jamming and how the thought of jumping crossed his mind. The White Elephant may be his ticket away from the panthers and down from the rafters. Might be a few other tickets.

Sir Ali has "discovered" the very hot talented Japanese saxophonist Yasuaki Shimizu and his countryman friend who sings through a megaphone. Ramancho Marta, who produced Don Cherry's recent vocal album, brought in some funky salsa for several nights. And then there is Zebele and Nene, a Brazilian wife and husband team; Nene played drums with Hermerto Pascoal, Zebele sings.

All of this tends to result in unpredictable, sometimes untogether but often exciting music and the frequent puzzled expressions on the musicians' faces reflect the related uncertainty. Just when will the owners decide to stop dabbling with Sir Ali and his, ugh, jazz? Is it just a matter of time? There is a bag of shit hanging precariously over the fan.

But the faces also reflect hope, and there is also for the first time in years a place to hang out in Central Paris where you can take advantage of that most attractive element of improvised music, expecting the unexpected. *Les Bains, 7 Rue Bourg-l'Abbé, Paris, 75003, (1) 48-87-01-80.*

The Sunset in Les Halles is a more straightforward joint, just beginning to feel permanent. Business was no more than slow when it opened a bar over a year ago with Steve Grossman. But it was difficult to push through the front door to hear the Steve Lacy Quartet last week (Lacy is Paris's one-man jazz explosion). Not known for hyperbole or excessive animation, he described this gig there, matter-of-fact: "The joint is jumping."





L E S T E R Y O U N G

This is a transcript of the last interview — as far as we can ascertain — that Lester Young gave before he died. It was conducted by François Postif in March 1959 in Paris.

On the recording, Lester sounds old and tired but not without a certain resilience, even this late in a life that had taken so many hard knocks. Postif questions him in a fumbling, conciliatory style, and Young answers gamely enough, though he is silent or irascible when the details threaten to hurt him. He apologizes, at the beginning, for "talking nasty": sensitive readers should be warned that I have left in most of the nasty words.

The best soundtrack for this reading would be one of his sturdier late records — the *Verve Prez And Teddy*, for instance. Lester Young remains one of the few originals in a music where the second-hand and the counterfeit have devalued the real originality: his final comments here, on how other people wanted him to play, are a sad indictment of the way new ideas are always dealt with. It was the tragedy of Young's life that such a gentle spirit was crushed by racial, social and aesthetic attitudes. He died a couple of weeks after this conversation was taped.



(For more details on Lester Young's life, see Lewis Porter's biography *Lester Young*, reviewed last issue. We are grateful to M Postif for loaning the original tape of this interview, parts of which have previously appeared in *Jazz Hot* magazine.)

Richard Cook

GOODBYE PORKPIE HAT

LESTER, SOME PEOPLE SAY YOU

were born in New Orleans . . . were you? Should I really tell you? I could tell you a lie . . . I was born in Woodville, Mississippi. I was born there, then they take me to New Orleans. And that's where I was raised. My mother was scared, you know, so she wanted to go back to the family in case something happen. So after I was straight and she made it and everything was cool, then she take me to New Orleans. And we lived in Algiers, which is on the river across from New Orleans.

I didn't meet my father until I was ten years old. I didn't know I have one. So it was only my mother, my sister and my brother, that's all. Then the music got me. See, like in New Orleans they have them trucks that go on and advertize for a dance this night and you'd give 'em a dance, and this excited me, you know. So I'd be the handbill for it. They give me some handbills and I would be running round and give the motherfuckers these handbills, you know, like that, and I just loved that music. I was runnin' till my tongue was hanging out like this. Still, I didn't know my father was a musician, you dig? Every time they'd start to play, bang! I'd run there!

Then my father came. He played all instruments. From New Orleans I went to Memphis, and then to Minneapolis. I was raised mostly in Minneapolis, trying to go to school and all that bullshit. And then I came back to Kansas City. That's when I got with Count. He used to have a tenor player that played . . . and every night I'd get off, you know, like the time was different in Minneapolis, maybe it's one o'clock, one-thirty, and that type of shit . . . so I sat in the town band. I said, man, I can't stand to hear this motherfucker blowing that shit! Do you accept me for a job? During that time, Earl Hines had eyes for me, and everybody was hitting on me, but I would just hear this motherfucker, turn on my radio and hear that thing, wheee! So they sent me a ticket. And I left my madam, you know that, and I went on that and worked . . .

But first you were playing drums, weren't you?

Right.

Why did you take drums as your first instrument?

Because, like I was telling you about, them trucks that was playing when I was sent out with the handbills. Here was the onliest person that I liked, it was these drums, you dig? Everytime I'd be in a nice little place and meet me a little bitch, dig? Her mother'd say, all right Mary, come on, let's go! Goddamn, I'm trying to pack these motherfuckers fast, and shit like this, 'cause I want this little bitch, you dig? And all this jumped off. Say, well, she calls her once, and twice . . . And I'm trying to get this shit straight. So I just said, fuck it! I'm through with these drums. Motherfuck those drums! All of the boys got those clarinet cases, trombone cases, trumpet cases, and here I am wiggling around with all this shit. So I have to know how to move, see? Fuck these motherfuckers! And I really played them! I could play my ass off. I'm playing for a year, but shit! Everything but that! And then you switched to alto. When did you do that?

Oh, I switched to . . . tenor. I was trying

the alto, and they had an old evil ass motherfucker. He had a nice, beautiful background, you know, mother and father and a whole lot of bread and all that shit like that. So everytime we'd get a job — this is in Salina, Kansas — we'd go to see this motherfucker, we'd all be ready, we'd be waiting 90 years to get us a gig, you know, and we go on — "oh, wait for me, while I put my shit on, I'll get my tie" . . . oh, everybody's waiting, disgusted. So I told the boss man, his name was Art Bronson, I said, You buy me a tenor saxophone, I'll play this motherfucker, and we'll be straight then. And he went to the music store. So those dudes get me a tenor saxophone and we split, fuck that motherfucker! So that's how I started playing it. And soon as I heard this bitch, I knew it was for me. That alto was a little too high for me, you know.

Some people say that when playing the tenor you just play the high notes, you know, like an alto. Do you think so? I know so! I want it to be like that. If you want it to be like a tenor I can play it like that too. You see, that's where the people get fucked at, you dig? I get all kinds of insults about it. You don't play it like you played when you with Count Basie . . . here I am getting older and things, and he's gone to look for young things and shit, the boy's fucking with it. But I don't remember no shit with Count Basie, you know, unless I have eyes, right. So I have developed my saxophone and play it, make it sound like that also, make it sound like a tenor, make it sound like a bass, and everything, and I'm not through working at it yet. That's the way they all get trapped up. They go, Goddamn, I've never heard any player like this! That's the way I want things, that's modern, dig? Fuck what you played back in '49. What the fuck are you gonna play today? You dig? So a lot of them get lost. Do you play the same thing every day? Are you playing modern now?

Yeah. In my heart. I'm sure of it

IN THE BASIE BAND, HOW WAS

your relationship with Herschel Evans?

We were nice friends and things, but I mean there was no bullshit or nothing. When we got up on the bandstand and play, it's like a duo, you know. And then other nights we'd get it nice. But I mean it's coming through those instruments, you dig? He was a nice person. I was also the last one to see him die. In fact I paid the doctor for his bill and everything. Were you considered the star of the band when you were with Count Basie?

Well, I'll tell you about that. Like in all of the shit out in Kansas City, you know, all that shit like that, I made that for myself. I was independent, very much so. That's true. I'd have left there overnight if I'd had 500 dollars. I just can't take that bullshit, you dig, it's all bullshit, and they want everybody who is a negro to be Uncle Tom or Uncle Remus or Uncle Sam. And I can't make it.

Not here, you know, not in France . . . Shit! Shit! Are you kidding? I've been here two weeks I've been taken up on that. Well, I wanna tell you what I know jumped off right here. Steeing is believing and hearing is a bitch. That's a sound right here in gay Paris! Maybe it wouldn't happen to you, you dig? You're not

a coloured person like I am, you dig? They gonna take advantage of me, but all I can do is tell you what happened, and I'm not gonna tell you that part of it. But it did happen, by somebody you would not believe, Joe, a great person. It's the same way all over, you dig? You just fight for your life, that's all, until death do we part. You got it.

Who was the tenor player who had made an influence on you?

Oh . . . he died. Frankie Trumbauer. I had to make a decision between Frankie Trumbauer and Jimmy Dorsey, you dig? And I had these motherfucking records. And I played one of Jimmy's, I played one of Trumbauer's, and all of that shit! I don't know nothing about Hawk then, you dig, but I can see the other people that was telling stories like I liked to hear. So I would play one of his, one of them, so I have both of them made, you dig?

Some people told me that Bud Freeman had an influence on you.

Bud Freeman? Oh, we're nice friends. I saw him in the Union the other day, but ivy-diy! He had influence on me? Hoo, monstre, branchemen!

So it was Trumbauer.

That was my man. I had to pick from two, right? Ever hear him play "Singin' The Blues"? That trick told me, right there. That's where I went.

What is your opinion about the blues?

The blues? Great big eyes . . . because if you play with a new band like I have, you know, working around you, if they don't know no blues, they can't play the shit where everybody plays the blues and have them too.

Are you a very easy composer? Can you put your ideas right down on the sheet of paper?

No, I'll tell you about that. I see what you're saying. You see, when I was coming up playing in the band, I wasn't reading music — I was bullshitting. But I was in the band, and my father gave me an alto of a pawnshop. I just picked the motherfucker up and just started playing that. And that's the way they went. So here is a musician, he played all the instruments and shit, and my sister, see, she was playing and I'd get close to her, and pick up on the part, you know, playing marches and all that shit like that. And finally my father one day said — Kansas, play your part! I knew goddamn well that he knew I was not reading. Play your part, Kansas — bambaboudum pouboududum poun! Say, now, Lester, play your part — and I could not read a motherfucking note! Not a goddamn note! He said, you know he don't cuss like I do, sad, get up and get you fucking ass and walk me some scales! Get out! Dig?

Well, you know, my heart was broken, dig? I went and cried and get me my little teardrops and said, well, I'll come back and catch these motherfuckers, if that's the way they want it. So I went away and learn how to read the music still by myself, you dig? Then I came back in the band, played this music and shit, and all the time I was counting on the records, also with the music, so I could fuck these motherfuckers completely up. So I went in there, they took the goddamn marches out and I read the music and shit, and everything was great. But what was in my heart is why all these motherfuckers laugh when they put me

out when I couldn't read and come up and say, won't you show me how that goes? You play it like that? Show you? I won't show you a shit, you rusty motherfucker! So that's the way it happened. Now I made that score and I don't like to read music. I don't like to read . . .

. . . Just playing, like, soul.

Yeah, I got a man back in New York now, writing some music for me. When I get back, I got bass violin, two cellos, and a viola and a french horn, see what I mean? And the three rhythms, you know, what goes with that. But, you know, Prez, your compositions have a very easy swing.

Mmm. I'm gonna take my time, and I'm gonna try this, say, if it don't come out right, fuck it, I'll say no. But it's my first time and I always wanted to do that. Norman Granz never did let me make a record with strings, you know. Yardbird made millions of records with strings.

Do you want to get a full band with strings and you playing in front of it?

Well, when I was over here before, I played with the first winners. I think they must have been Germans. They have a war over here. Anyway I played with the first one, and the second one. That's all I can say 'cause don't understand too much about that. And they treated me nice and played nice for me, and things like that, you know. There's nothing wrong with that, but I played with the first winner, first, number one, then I played with the second.

DO YOU LISTEN BACK TO YOUR records?

No, not very much.

Which record do you prefer among those you've done?

I could never answer that . . . have you heard "Clap Hands, Here Comes Charlie"? That's a spark of my heart.

Billie gave you the name of Prez, and you gave her the name of Lady Day . . .

You see, when I first came to New York in '34, I used to live there, for a long time. She was teaching me about the city, you know, which way to go, you know, where everything is shitty . . . yeah, she's still my Lady Day. But people do mind, it's so obvious, you know. If you want to speak like that, what the fuck I give a fuck of what you do . . . what he does . . . what he does . . . what nobody do? It's nobody's business!

No, it's your own business.

So why are you going to get into it and say, he's an old junkie? And all that shit? That's not nice, you know. Whatever they do, let 'em do that and enjoy themselves and get your kicks yourself. Why you envy them because they enjoy themselves? Fuck it, you dig! All I do is smoke some New Orleans cigarettes, that's perfect. You know, no snuff, no shit in my nose, and nothing. Still, I'll drink and I'll smoke . . .

Well, it's your business.

But a lot of people think I'm on this. I don't like that. I resent that like a bitch. If I ever find the motherfucker, shit, I'd go crazy. Don't put that weight on me. I know.

I'm enjoying myself up here, by myself, to get away from all that shit — and I ain't got a quarter. But I don't walk around sighting the blues and all that shit, cause my old lady take

care of me. So fuck it. What do you think about the music you're playing now?

Well, I'll tell you. In my mind, the way I play, I try not to be a repeater-pencil, you dig? I'm always loosening spaces, laying out, or something like that . . . don't catch me like that, playing like "Lester Leaps In" or something like that. I'm always reaching . . . Do you think you can create something right now, a new sound, something more than what you've already done?

Uh, I can play a bass clarinet. Would that upset everything? I'd say that would kind of upset everything, wouldn't it? I'll bring out a bass clarinet. Matter of fact, I can play all those instruments.

Are you interested in new generations? Do you know new jazzmen like Coltrane or Sonny Rollins?

I know them both. Everybody knows.

Have you heard Coltrane?

No, I haven't heard him. No. Rollins — him and I played together in Detroit one night. What's that alto player, Cannonball? I've heard him.

Why did you leave the Count Basie band? That's some deep shit you're asking me now. I won't say that. Skip that one. But I sure could tell you why.

Did you enjoy your last recording with the Count, in Newport? You know, the way you blow in "Lesser Leaps In", you blew it mad!

I've been right here, I've been playing it all day. Nice eyes . . . oh, I mean I always bust my nuts when I play with them. I still have nice eyes, you know? I can't go around thanking and evil and all that shit. Everything is still cool with me, you know, 'cause I don't bother nobody. Playing my part, it comes out nice, you know. That's why I say what I do is my business, what you do is your business. People talk about the saga of Lester Young and try and insinuate things . . . But you take a person like me — I stay by myself. So how the fuck do you know anything about me? Say nothing. A motherfucker told me, he said, Prez, I thought you were dead! (laughter) In fact I am more alive than he is, you dig?

DO YOU PREFER TO PLAY WITH A trio, a quartet or just with a band?

No . . . give me my three little rhythm and me — happiness. That's four — the four Mills Brothers. It works for me. I can relax better, you dig? I don't like a whole lotta noise no goddamn way. Take them trumpets and trombones and all that shit — fuck it!

Just a quiet sound.

I'm looking for something *soft* right now. Soft eyes for me . . . I can't stand no loud shit, you dig? And the bitches come in a place in New York and them trumpets would be screaming and shit, the bitches put their fingers in their ears, you know? It's got to be sweetness, man, you dig? Sweetness can be funky, filthy, or anything. But which part do you want?

Where did you get your sound?

When I was in Kansas City I ran a million miles to hear Coleman Hawkins play. Fletcher Henderson came out and said, don't you have no tenor players here in Kansas City? Herschel was there, but he couldn't *read*. So they said,

Red — they called me Red then — go in and blow this goddamn saxophone. They told me how great Coleman Hawkins was, I didn't see how great he is — I got up and played this saxophone, and read the music, and played the charts and everything. I wanted to see Coleman but I don't think he showed at all. Then I went to Little Rock with Count Basie and I got this telegram from Fletcher Henderson saying, come with me. I was excited with this big-time shit. I showed it to Count and said, what do you think I should do? He said, ain't nothing I can do. I split and went to Detroit first, went to Fletcher Henderson's house. But I wasn't happy. The motherfuckers were whisperin' on me while I was playing, Jesus! So I split. And I went to Andy Kirk's band, had a nice time.

L E S T E R



Y O U N G

Don't make no sense. If it's trying to put some shit on people, no better for your ass. I knew I got a good horn, just trying to get me some money for my family. And it's all clean, believe that. And this bitch would take me down, Fletcher Henderson's wife, and play this old wind-up thing and say, Lester, can't you play like this? A Coleman Hawkins thing. Try to make me play like Coleman Hawkins. Fuck the motherfuckers. I'm gone. That's real shit.



SHANKAR

DIAGNOSING THE EPIDEMIC:
A NEW LIFETIME IN AN
EAST-WEST ECM POP
FUSION IMPROVISATION
SITUATION.

By STEVE LAKE

1969 en route for a PhD in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University

To the relief of disc jockeys, his name was curtailed to the more enigmatic L. Shankar (promoting tedious queries of what does that L stand for?) when he recorded his first LP under Frank Zappa's surveillance. Credit the Mother with perspicacity for his talent scouring in the fiddlers' field (Sugarcane Harris, then Ponty, then L.), but the contract that came with the record put a straitjacket on Shankar's musical freedom. A lot of projects that might have been were not. His circle of friends in this period included Ornette, Van Morrison and Jimmy Garrison. The idea of a pan-cultural music, long in his mind, began to take more concrete form . . .

Back in Madras, his parents had actively tried to thwart his inclinations towards music. The family were already chock-full of violin virtuosos. Unasked, the infant Lakshminarayana began singing ragas at two and dodged school to practise violin at a friend's home. He gave his first public recital at the age of seven.

By this tender age he had already acquired an enduring affection for Elvis and Sinatra. For the Beatles he was gung ho from the off.

"People forget that Indian music is firstly a

REINCARNATION, ANYBODY? HE claims that some of his songs, flitting with variants on that haven't-I-seen-you-somewhere-before theme, deal with the matter. And his wife Caroline, who sings and plays keyboards with their band the Epidemics says — only half-joking — that violinist Shankar has had half a dozen lives already.

It's surprising he survived a few of them. Take the time when, as part of the all-acoustic Indo-jazz synthesis group Shakti, he opened a stadium date for . . . wait for it . . . *Black Sabbath*. His eyes glitter with a cheeky merriment as he recalls the sky darkening with projectiles, and the bottles and cans ricocheting off the monitors. (What can the promoter have been thinking of?)

When known as Lakshminarayana Shankar he regularly topped India's charts with his recordings of that nation's classical music. Yet due (as far as I could understand it) to the inquiries of the Asian publishing business, international currency restrictions and, surely, a bad day on the money market, he had exactly eight dollars in his pocket when he disembarked at New York in

vocal music," he says in a rapid yet pleasant Indian-inflected English, coloured with occasional American musoisms. "There are words to all the ragas. I've always loved lyrics and had a natural feeling for Western pop things. Like 'fusion' is not a word I use because I don't feel like I'm bringing together elements that are incompatible . . ."

SOME WILL ALWAYS DISAGREE.

When Shakti was formed critical opinion in India was not so much distressed by the fact that one of their favourites was working with a jazz musician as with the realization that South and North Indian traditions were being fused via the introduction of tabla genius Zakir Hussain. A Northerner in the band! Unforgivable. India got used to the idea in the end and seven years after the dissolution of Shakti the group re-formed for a one-off tour of Shankar's homeland.

"I didn't really want to do it because I'm not into reunions. People change and move on and sometimes the past is better left in the past. But the audiences loved it, anyway, even though the music was much as I thought it would be. It wasn't really happening."

Shankar and Hussain in post-Shakti combinations have been responsible for some of the heaviest music this winter has ever heard. At the 1981 Berlin Jazz Festival, their live performance of "Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi" shook the audience into a dead silence. This was *impossible* stuff. Music of bewildering virtuosity. Shankar's violin lines, endlessly fluid, were spiralling up, up, up, to notes I did not know I could still hear. Lurie, dancing, the music swirled onward into this dog-whistle bat-pulse ultra-sonic domain. Shankar's fingering technique, as he executes the microtonal stars of Indian music, can be truly breathtaking. It is, literally, staggering — as if the rug's been pulled from beneath your feet. Well, gradually the music climbed back down through the octaves until it began to sound like the best of the history of string music. Here was a sequence that put you in mind of Webern bagatelles, here a sequence with the near minimalist insistence of Bach's *partitas* for solo violin . . .

Second knock-out performance: in Munich in 1984 with a quartet featuring Jan Garbarek on saxophones plus Hussain plus second percussionist Teloq Gurru. Hussain had a grip on the mathematics of the rhythm that defied Garbarek to play his trademark dolorous lonely-poet-on-a-Nordic-mountaintop role. The music never stayed still long enough for that. Garbarek had to work his ass off to stay with it and, have to admit it, finally rose to an exhilarating performance in a set with more chase sequences than *Hill Street Blues*.

Saw them again in '85 with Nana Vasconcelos depping for Hussain. Disaster. Nana seems to think that the bag of tracks he brings out for Egberto Giambiatti's music will work for every context. The body-slaps, the little wickerwork brainbags, the tiny range of whispered vocal sounds. "Sya jyv jyo Pow waa waa." All of these had the effect of steam brakes applied to Shankar's conception. The music never got off the ground. Garbarek seemed to be playing a selection of Scandinavian Christmas carols so nobody in particular and Shankar retreated into the background trying to make the texture of his music interesting at least with broad slurs of electronic/psychedelic colour from that amazing double-necked ten-string violin of his.

Early in '86 as we sit across a tape recorder in his mother-in-law's Kensington apartment, Shankar is forthright about the failure of that outfit, takes criticism like a man, as saying goes, and volunteers a few more tales of mediocrity and missed hits. He once wrote an album's worth of material for a project with Pat Metheny only to cancel the recording session after he felt they'd rehearsed all the spontaneity out of the music.

As a session player he has a reputation for being able to write arrangements at lightning speed and Phil Collins, Lou Reed, Yoko Ono, Peter Gabriel, Afrika Bambaataa, Talking Heads, Echo And The Bunnymen and most recently The Pretenders have benefited from his quick-chunking solutions. But for all his love of pop he's appalled by the lethargy and indecision and wasted money in that world. He remembers Bill Laswell clamping walls for the first month and a half of the Jagger album when it was anybody's guess if Mick was coming to the studio that week and has own frustrations during Echo's *Porcupine* sessions where nobody knew what they wanted. The band begged for suggestions from their management who deferred the matter to the record company who'd admit they didn't know much about music but they knew what they liked. Shankar overdubbed an orchestra while they prevaricated. In the end they took his ideas aboard wholesale.

Still, that was then. The current priority is the Shankars' own pop band, The Epidemics. It is an outgrowth of an earlier group called Sadhus which also featured Caroline as singer. She's a Londoner, now resident in New York, and co-writes the material with her husband.

THE GROUP HAS PLAYED AROUND 70 American concerts so far and is currently gearing up for its first European tour just as soon as they've participated in the massive anti-Sun City rally shaping up on the horizon.

According to the duo their concerts average out at around four hours each, incorporating songs, improvisations, solo segments. A recent highlight was their participation in the 450th birthday celebrations for the city of Quebec. Shankar wrote a composition for the Quebec Symphony Orchestra and The Epidemics freely improvised over the top of it.

I have to take their word for it in the absence of a tape, because the first record from the group deserves the appellation *carte's egg* more than anything that's crossed my path since the Kronos String Quartet took to playing a repertoire of Monk tunes.

It's not easy to know what to make of it. It's on ECM, it's a no-holds-barred pop record, but was not produced by Manfred Eicher. The master tape was presented as a *first accompli* whereupon Eicher allegedly exclaimed, "Want it! It's the greatest pop record I've ever heard!" (A not irrelevant corollary: the ECM boss has not heard many pop records.)

Steve Vai, lately lured away from The Epidemics by David Lee Roth's wallet, plays acerbic guitar all over the LP and Percy Jones, whom I prefer to think of as a former Soft Machine bassist rather than ex-Brand X, enlivens the monolithic drum machine rhythms making the beat seem more elastic than it is. Whether jazz fans will stick around long enough to measure the profundity of their contributions is another matter. I can imagine a mutiny among ECM diehards like lemmings off a cliff. For The Epidemics' is not music that will underline would-be sophomores' shaky sense of self. In fact, it's more likely to make them fear that people will think they are slumming.

Still, a weeding-out of that particular camp is overdue. And *The Epidemics* may be the disc to take the Munich label into a new phase. Commercially, the company must be casting around to fill the hole left by Pat Metheny's departure for Geffen and Shankar's pop tendencies are unlikely to be discouraged. After all, he is so good at all the other things he does, why deny him this facet of expression?

But Shankar's singing is not a patch on his compositional or playing ability and Caroline's vocals are singularly unemotional. Shankar seems to think that the mere presence of two genders at the microphone is its own argument. "I've always loved the idea of male-female vocals, to have the whole spectrum there, you know?" And though he may "love lyrics" this does not mean that he is as yet adept at writing them.

Longer than that, even. "The Epidemics is a band for life," says Shankar.

"You see," Caroline adds, "live we can incorporate all the other music that Shankar has done . . ."

The listener who pays proper attention will catch some of that on their record too; the violin and guitar fills on "Never Take No" are more interesting than the dominant melody. And "No Cure", which has the hardest drum machine beat, allows the musicians some freedom. A couple of strange slurred solos from Shankar over Vai's lurching seas of distortion.

Too often, though, the musicianship seems throttled by the pop structures . . . how this will settle down when the dust has cleared is anybody's guess.

In the pipeline for imminent release is a Shankar solo (as in "alone") album and future projects "probably" include collisions with classical music heavies Gidon Kremer (violinist and director of the Lockenhaus Chamber Music Festival) and Dennis Russell Davies (former director of the Stuttgart Opera, piano player and occasional interpreter of Keith Jarrett's "serious" works). And The Epidemics will finish the year with a festival tour of India, Shankar introducing such pals as The Pretenders and Simple Minds and Peter Gabriel to the folks back home. Eclecticism? You ain't seen nothing yet.

SO WHAT ARE THE REAL intentions of this displaced Indian classical musician?

"Well," he begins, "everything that I have done until now I have done only for the love of music . . ."

I've heard this line before, too, but I surprise myself by believing Shankar. He appears to be completely without guile. An old-fashioned optimist of the deepest dye . . .

. . . but The Epidemics is the only band I want to be involved with, as far as I can see into the future. It's something really serious for me."

How important is its large-scale success? Shankar giggles a little, raising a hand politely to his lips.

"You know we've played some very small clubs and I've enjoyed them a lot. Two or three sets in front of a small crowd, that's the way to get your music together. We've also played some very big festivals. Eighty people or 10,000 people, it doesn't matter to me. In fact, one person could be nice. If you're playing music to an audience of one you know very quickly if you are communicating or not, don't you think?"

Hmmm. It would be pretty depressing to find out that you weren't.

"Yes, but even from the worst experiences we always learn something," says Shankar, still smiling philosophically.

"Always," Caroline agrees sagely.

This is a point of view that resists argument. I pack the tape machine away and sink off.

BOOKS

Records, traditions and the Saint Louis Blues...



Edith, of the little black dress, tells Django's fortune

LA TRISTESSE DE SAINT LOUIS: SWING UNDER THE NAZIS

By Mike Zwerin (Quarter, £13.95 hb)

"DJANGO REINHARDT REINVENTED the guitar like Louis Armstrong reinvented the trumpet, and Joseph Goebbels was reinventing propaganda at just about the same time." That sort of construction is typical Zwerin: a well-chosen epigram mixes with an historical punchline, the whole thing saliced with a bit of

flip wit. On the next page, I find namechecks for Bob Dylan and Michael Jackson. Zwerin telescopes the world into his chosen lecture: his prose often reads like a teletypewriter magically galvanized into lightening description, gleaming with bright adjectives.

The book's subject looks ponderously gloomy, but no Zwerin book could be dull; and no Zwerin book could really be about anything but Zwerin himself. He is chorus to the historical scenes and actor-director in the contemporary research, which meant a trek across Europe to locate surviving voices and memories in an attempt to piece together a picture of how occupied Europe leavened its repression with the playing of subversive jazz music. Zwerin's first idea was to write a story of jazz in World War II, but he was "blitzkrieged" into mixing history with a personal memoir of picking up the threads.

The result is either irritating or engrossing: it depends on how much you like Zwerin. The personal judgements he makes have a ring of wry omnipotence about them — somehow he manages to sidestep a particular "morality" in favour of a more honest (but definitely hip) cracker-barrel sort of view.

What he found was a lot of old men whose faith had been kept alive by nostalgia, or evaporated by time; his conclusion seals the narrative of the book as a flight of sustained irony — "If Goebbels had swung to 'St Louis Blues' instead of banning it, there would have been no 'Tristesse De St Louis', no 'Golden Age'." Scenes are set deftly with a sprinkling of words — like a handful of snapshots suddenly scattered on a tabletop. Zwerin is brilliant at that sort of ching.

And many of his scenes are more valuably alive than any of the duster histories — he evokes Django Reinhardt as a living legend more perceptively than anyone ever has. For that alone, the book is essential. But this amused, chuckling, extravagant, bothered, bear-like man Zwerin is himself the pulsebeat of the whole story. I think it's a splendid book.

Richard Cook

RHYTHM-A-NING: JAZZ TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN THE '80s

By Gary Giddins (Oxford University Press, £17.50 hb)

SINCE THE 50s, WHITNEY BALLIFITT'S diaries of reviews, reflections and observations have recorded the changes in jazz as seen through the eyes of one of its most astute and literate students. Starting with "The Sound Of

"Surprise" in 1954, his essays for *New Yorker* continued through five volumes that ended with *Night Creature*, his work to July 1980. Taken together, they have come the closest to codifying a critical aesthetic in jazz, which hitherto had developed rather loosely alongside the music, confined largely to the views of discographers and historians. It was not until 1981, with the appearance of *Riding On A Blue Note* by Gary Giddins that a collection of reviewer's critiques and observations offered a similar perceptive insight into the music, and indeed, made suggestions with convincing weight as to how the art could be perceived. Straight away, Giddins demonstrated the ability, like Balliett, subtly to educate his readers in what to listen for, in order that they might reach a better understanding of the music.

Rhythms-A-Norg: Jazz Tradition In The '80s continues Giddins' work, drawn mostly from *Village Voice*, gathering together 64 articles from 1978 to 1984. Throughout he is keen to share his enthusiasm, which he reinforces with a sound grasp of the jazz tradition, placing a performer's work into historical context and evaluating it against the main exponents and antecedents of a particular style. He is equally at home discussing Teddy Wilson, Joe Turner and Roy Eldridge, for example, as he is with Cecil Taylor, David Murray and Andrew Cyrille's new band – and equally even-handed across the stylistic divide. Above all, he is positive, communicating easily what he feels of value in a performer's work, and he is disarmingly honest. Discussing Pat Metheny, for example, he takes him to task: "His music is often swamped by Brahmsian gloss, as dollops of superficial *Weltsturm* vie with folksy tunes . . .", but is forced to concede during a review of Metheny's 80/81 album and a performance by the 80/81 band at the Village Vanguard that Metheny has "talent – and he has a lot of it and is very young – 80/81 and the Vanguard gig serve notice that his potential is great". Despite his feelings about the gig, you can actually feel Giddins being won over as he delights in a new facet of Metheny's talent.

He is also witty; fusion always arouses his ire, and Stan Getz's brief flirtation with this "debilitating illness" gives him amusing mileage to vent his spleen. But he can use humour like a rapier to underline his argument – on the Miles Davis track "Man With The Horn" he says, "Davis once told an interviewer that his hobby was 'making fun of white folks on television'. With this wilting performance he appears to have expanded his field to black

folks on radio."

The underlying theme of the book, however, is Giddins' conviction that jazz is presently involved in a "neo-classical" revolution. "My intuition tells me," he says, "that innovation isn't this (current) generation's fate. After the turbulence of the past 20 years, however, with the *avante garde* rooting out clichés only to be followed by fusion mercenaries and their middlebrow posturing, the neo-classicists have a task no less valuable than innovation: sustenance."

In convincing essays he looks to the like of Arthur Blythe, David Murray, Wynton and Bradford Marsalis and Ronald Shannon Jackson to lead jazz to the higher ground of increased public awareness. His frustration that many young, brilliant musicians are working in relative obscurity often pops to the surface. His optimism during Arthur Blythe's tenure with Columbia that his recordings would "assault radio and dare I say it TV", turns to pessimism two years later, when at the end of a brilliant study of David Murray he reflects, "jazz remains so isolated by the virtual blackout in the mass media that the hardest question raised by the appearance of David Murray is, what must an exceptionally gifted American musician . . . do to get the hearing he deserves?"

But despite these occasional moments of gloom, Giddins' prognosis suggests, if not a rosy future for jazz, then a period of regrouping, of playing to strengths of the music. "The *avante garde*, by definition, has no right to an audience larger than its true believers," he asserts. The way ahead is "to restore order, revitalize the best, lost tradition for whatever works, and expand the audience".

How true, and if you don't agree, then how thought-provoking – which is the essence of these fascinating studies.

Stuart Nicholson

MODERN DISCOGRAPHY/ PROGRESSIVE DISCOGRAPHY/ MODERN BIG BAND DISCOGRAPHY

Edited by W. Bruyninx

WE DEAL IN THE BUSINESS OF notes, but sometimes I think numbers call the tune more frequently. If you're going to try and get to grips with jazz, you need to hear an awful lot of records: in his introduction to these books, Bruyninx points out that a full discography of jazz records will, by the end of the century, probably run to over 25,000

pages and cover something like 300,000 LPs. Never mind the 78s.

The science of discography has grown up with jazz, ever since Charles Delauney's *Hot Discography* 50 years ago, but jazz has relentlessly outpaced attempts at indexing and classification; which is why Bruyninx's first project *60 Years Of Recorded Jazz* seemed to go down with droopy. What he and his team have now done is split all the post-Rust categories into the areas listed above: "modern" is bop, hard bop and west coast, "progressive" is just about anything after Coleman and the big band books are self-explanatory. Twelve books, each around 400 pages, will form a set; so far we have about half of each topic available.

Bruyninx admits the difficulties of cross-classification but shrugs it off – what else can he do? Lines have to be drawn in discographies, just as they are everywhere else, and though I would have put, say, Steve Grossman under "modern" rather than "progressive", most points of crossover are negotiated fairly sensibly. If it seems bizarre that improvised and neoclassical music should also be listed, well, consult your own collections. I've come across large areas of recording that I was unaware of browsing through the books, and the fieldwork done – particularly in recent European recording – seems diligent. But it's hard to say what omissions there might be. Jazz recording is a global phenomenon – are we given the full lowdown on the New Zealand/Spanish/Icelandic jazz LPs?

Never mind. Discographies are stocks of information and useful listeners' tools if you hear a record by Claude Barthélémy, think it's great and want to know what else there is, Bruyninx will tell you. I just saw a Derek Bailey record I didn't know about, too. Bruyninx isn't exhaustive – players aren't cross-referenced, there are no indices (as yet), and it's all records, no broadcasts and not too many bootlegs (which is why the Coltrane section seems small). That does, however, tend to make the books easier to use. Are they worth the money? It depends on how much detail you want to go with your turntable. They are a lot of fun simply to look at.

Unintentionally, on occasion Richard "Groove" Holmes has become "Groovy", according to Bruyninx.

Richard Cook

(*Vols 2 & 3 of "Modern", 1 — 2 of "Progressive" and 1 of "Modern Big Band" are currently available from MoleJazz, Kings Cross, London.*)

"I WAS BORN TO SING THE GOSPEL – and I sure do love my job" – Washington Phillips' 1927 recording, with its eccentric but charming dulcetola accompaniment, gave testimony to the pride of black performers who elected to follow the gospel highway. Black gospel music in all its forms is acknowledged to have permeated most Afro-American forms. Whether you're listening to Charles Mingus or James Brown, King Oliver or Michael Jackson, you're hearing music that has drawn some of its inspiration from the long tradition of black religious music.

Yet for all its importance, gospel remains relatively uncharted, its geography sliding off the musical map into *terra incognita*. Paul Oliver's recent book *Singers And Saints* (Cambridge University Press), which looked at neglected corners of black music, took as its text a 1928 sermon recorded by Rev F W McGee: "the hab am never been told". *Singers And Saints* (the book and the accompanying records, which include the Washington Phillips track already quoted) showed how many treasures had been overlooked by black music history's prolonged focus on jazz and blues.

Oliver concentrated his attention on recordings from the 20s and 30s. If anything, gospel since WWII remains even more neglected, but the last year has shown signs that what has been hidden will eventually see the light of day.

For many English-speaking fans, gospel has always been a problem because it is religious music; heathen fans have been reluctant to tackle such exuberant Christianity. Of course, we need to respect the deeply-held beliefs of gospel singers (not all Christians by any means) and their audience; but you don't have to believe in Satan's healing powers to appreciate Sun Ra. Music's meanings and pleasures are not defined solely by its subject matter.



The Spirit of Memphis Quartet (all seven)

BLESS MY BONES

NICK KIMBERLEY RAISES
AN AMEN! FOR THE HISTORY
OF GOSPEL AS HE SORTS
THROUGH RECENTLY REISSUED
SACRED SONGS.

IN TERMS OF RECORD REISSUES, THE lead has been taken by the small labels grouped under Bruce Bastin's Interstate logo, including Krazy Kat, which set the ball rolling with two volumes of *Get Right With God*, anthologies assembled from various 40s and 50s labels. Bastin admits that "I put the first volume out, expecting to sell maybe 500 copies over a long period". The response surprised him; a companion volume quickly followed. The collections are wonderful primers of the gospel styles flourishing after WWII: preachers, bluesy guitar evangelists, but particularly vocal groups recording in the "quartet" style. Finely balanced harmonies and emotional lead vocals characterize the quartets (who sometimes numbered more than four members). They have had the greatest influence on black music outside gospel. Quartet singing has its roots in pre-war

groups, as Bastin's Gospel Heritage reissue of tracks by the Heavenly Gospel Singers shows Group harmonies allow the lead vocal ample emotional and rhythmic scope, as their recording (the first) of Thomas Dorsey's "Take My Hand, Precious Lord" demonstrates.

But the truly great gospel quartets recorded after the war, when the Heavenly Gospel Singers' vocal framework was bent and expanded to allow an awesome emotional power. The first volume of *Get Right With God* includes the Five Blind Boys of Mississippi's "When God Dips His Pen Of Love". Archie Brownlee's screaming lead balances between control and abandon, while the rhythmic, bass-heavy harmonies add depth and texture, superseding the need for instrumental accompaniment. This is music which matches its spiritual power with an enormous physical impact.

Bastin has now issued the first in a series of regional quartet LPs. *New Orleans Gospel Quartets* (Gospel Heritage) displayed that illustrious city's forgotten musical past, including new tracks by all-women groups, the Jackson Gospel Singers and the Southern Harps, every bit as delicately balanced yet forceful as their more celebrated male counterparts. The regional anthologies will continue with Detroit, Atlanta, Cleveland/Cincinnati, anywhere where gospel groups gathered to record. Bastin admits that the regional concept is a convenience: styles don't necessarily differ from city to city; a group may be included who simply happened to record in a city while on tour from somewhere else. But the series will show the huge spread of gospel recordings, from one end of America to the other.

Bastin relies on research on discographers in the States, who paradoxically find it difficult to persuade US companies to tackle gospel issues. One such discographer is Doug Seroff, also responsible for the wonderfully titled Clankalanka label, issued in Sweden of all places but coordinated by Seroff. Clankalanka exists to underline, in Seroff's words, "the incredible scope of black vocal harmony traditions: black four-part vocal harmony traditions (sacred and secular) have a coherent, traceable history that goes back to slavery times".

Such quartet singing just about survives into the present, as Seroff demonstrated in the gospel programme in last year's Channel 4 series *Reverendum*. But it's a dying art whose greatest glories are in the past. Seroff's first Clankalanka project was *Birmingham Quartet Anthology*, which, with monumentally detailed notes, traced 25 years of mainly gospel harmony singing in one small part of America. Despite its narrow geographical scope, the musical selection was richly varied. The seminal Famous Blue Jay Singers stand out on

tracks from three phases of their career: the early 30s, the immediate post-war period, and one track from the 50s. That historical spread shows how the tight quartet style of the '30s loosened to allow a greater, almost unbearable emotional range.

Seroff's record projects have even surfaced in Japan. Erratic availability and high price make Japanese LPs a tricky proposition, but *Bless My Bones* (P-Vine) is a valuable addition to any gospel collection. Subtitled "Memphis Gospel Radio In The Fifties", it assembled previously unissued dubs of recordings made for radio station WDJA in Memphis. Rarity isn't the only appeal: there is some stunning music here too, from the Spirit Of Memphis Quartet, one of the backbones of gospel singing, from the Sunset Travellers, who include a youthful O V Wright, later a successful soul singer; from the Songbirds Of The South, another female quartet. Stars of the show are The Beewsterians, whose "Book Of The Seven Seals" is the only 70s recording included. It's a famously danceable track with all the panache of the great '40s quartets.

The Beewsterians also appear, rather surprisingly, in Charly Records' recently issued nine-LP set, *Soul Revival: The Blues Years*. Sun was a Memphis label known first for its blues, later for its rockabilly recordings (Presley made his first records there). Its gospel recordings have been almost completely neglected, but this set makes available one side (not enough) of the same sort of Memphis gospel available on *Bless My Bones*. Perhaps Charly can be persuaded to issue a single LP of Sun gospel. In the meantime, their catalogue does include *Jesus Is The Answer*, a collection of mostly 60s tracks recorded for Chicago label Vee-Jay. There are signs that by this time gospel was adapting itself to more popular styles (the Harmonizing Four's version of "Wade In The Water"), but there are some magical performances here, notably by the Staple Singers and the Swan Silvertones, whose falsetto lead, Claude Jeter, has had an incalculable influence on both gospel and soul singers.

One soul singer who took a lead from Jeter is Eddie Holman, whose pop records like "Hey There Lonely Girl" make ample use of a Jeter-like falsetto. Holman now records primarily for the religious market, and Charly have recently issued his *United* LP as the first record in the New Cross Gospel series. A pleasant example of the way gospel and soul have come closer together, the LP nevertheless lacks Jeter's intensity.

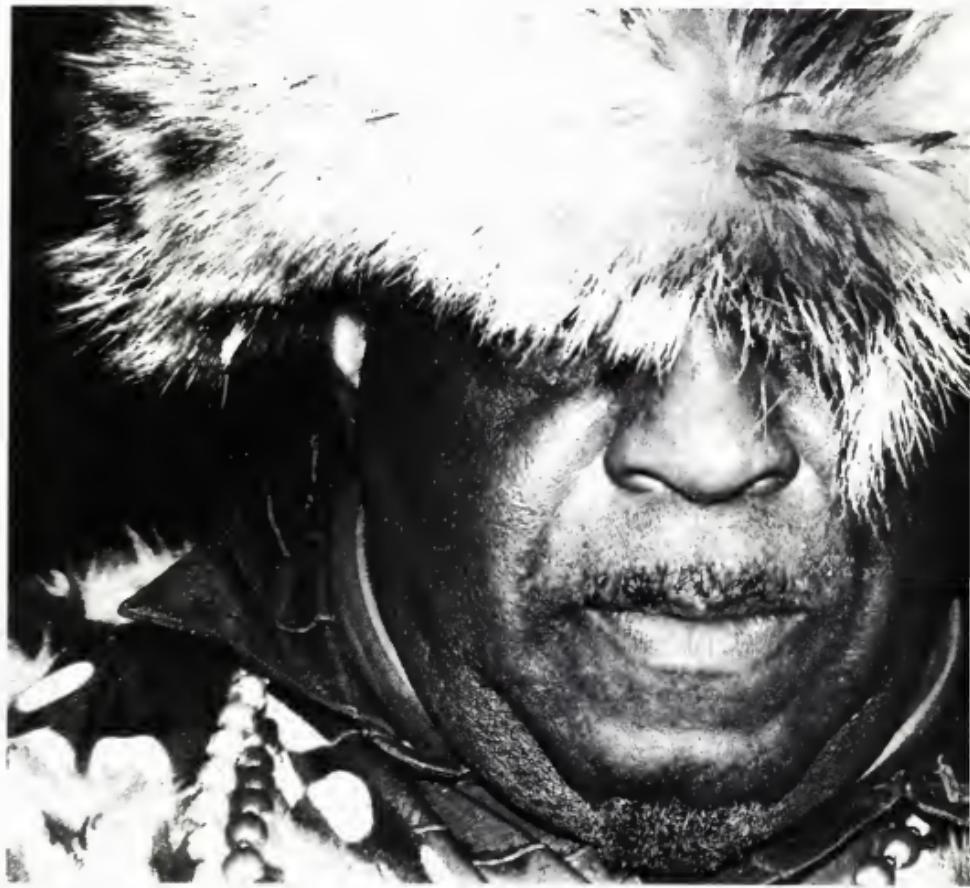
FUTURE PLANS FOR NEW CROSS
Gospel include collections of Vee-Jay tracks by both the Staple Singers and the Swan Silvertones; and anthologies from Jewel, a major gospel label since the 60s, and King,

important in the 40s. If only the major labels were as willing to dig up the gospel in their archives, but for the most part they refuse. One exception is MCA, who last year issued a fine double LP of tracks from the American Decca catalogue in the 40s, and from the Peacock label in Texas in the 50s and 60s. Called *Black Gospel*, the collection was issued to coincide with the publication of the first history of gospel to be published in this country, Viv Broughton's *Black Gospel* (Blandford). Gospel's long history is quickly but efficiently sketched in, and showed that Broughton might take issue with my assertion that the best gospel had already been recorded by the end of the 60s. Broughton draws our attention to currently active, and hugely popular artists like Vanessa Bell Armstrong, and James Cleveland. Cleveland performed last year to a packed Albert Hall, proving that his 20 years as the Crown Prince of Gospel have not diminished his vocal strength.

Broughton also reminded us of the gospel presence of Al Green, soul sex symbol turned pastor. Green's recent records *Precious Lord* and *Trust In God* (Hi) prove that his voice is as irresistibly sensuous when praising God as it used to be when praising Woman. For all their appeal, Green's gospel tracks indicate that in abandoning the possibly outdated classic gospel style, contemporary singers and producers are making music barely distinguishable from contemporary black pop.

Broughton disagrees, for him, gospel's brightest potential is in the future. What's more, the last chapter in his book, "Another Day's Journey", tells the story of gospel in this country, suggesting that its history might soon be as excitingly varied and important as its American counterpart. To underline that potential, Broughton has recently produced an hour-long video called *Gospel Joy* (directed by Stephen Cleary and Robert Lemkin). Recorded at Riverside Studios' 1985 gospel festival, the tape presents Britain's best young singers in action: small groups like the Spirit Of Waits and the Trumpets Of Zion alongside the huge Angelic Voice Choir. The star of the show is Shirley Fenty, who displays a depth of feeling and vocal range that can take its place alongside the best American gospel. *Gospel Joy* proves Broughton's point that British gospel need no longer be overshadowed by American gospel history.

I've briefly surveyed some of the existing releases and events which have underlined gospel's central importance over the last 18 months. With labels like Gospel Heritage, Charly and Clankalanka making available some of the glorious past, and singers like Al Green and Shirley Fenty demonstrating the continuing power of gospel on both sides of the Atlantic, the coming year could be the most exciting yet.



CHRIS CLUNN

SOUND CHECK

We polish our blue serge . . .



Mr Ra addresses the cosmos

SUN RA AND THE ARKESTRA

Cosmo Sun Connection
Children Of The Sun
Hiroshima
(Saturn)
No personnel, recording date or title details

THE MAJOR PROBLEM, AS FAR AS SUN Ra is concerned, is probably not one of simple logistics – of musically marshalling a band as wild and talented as the Arkestra, and dragging it around the world – but more one of utilizing his own protean talents in as powerful and focused a manner as possible.

Quality control, it's safe to say, was never one of Ra's strong suits. Where a Dolphy or an Ayler did little, but significantly little, the Fat Man from Saturn has meandered unchecked through his own personal musical cosmos, giving listeners as little guidance as he can get away with, while himself getting away with releasing some pretty ropey rubbish.

Any artist's career comprises creative crests and troughs, I suppose, and the most recent of Ra's crests was the years 1978–1980, during which time he released an astonishing 19 albums, most containing a high proportion of good, fiery material, and several – *Meditation Dream*, *Languidness and Dullness* 3000 from 1978, *Subtractive Fantasy* and *Of Myths Worlds* from 1979, and the pinnaculate *Strange Celestial Road* and *Saturn In Different Dimensions* from 1980 – being bona fide classics of the Ra canon, in a ridiculous array of styles.

Since then, he's put out another 15 albums, not one of which, I'm afraid, comes close to classic status. Some, like the three volumes of *Live At Praxis '84*, are simply unedited live performances, while others are rag-bags of out-takes and historical fragments of dubious heritage. It's into this latter category, I'm afraid, that at least two of these latest releases fall. "Collapse" might be a more appropriate term as regards *Cosmo Sun Connection*: this is pretty poor stuff, one side concentrating on synthi doodles with occasional accompaniment from the Arkestra, apparently trapped on a freeway somewhere outside the studio and honking for all they're worth, to little avail. A few of them are allowed the occasional roll, toot or scribble along the way, but there's little creative power in the ether hereabouts, and – more importantly for a band like Ra's – there appears to be little guiding vision. The other side features another lengthy live version of "Fate In A Pleasant Mood", which winds down into a bass-propelled percussion piece (during which, presumably, the Arkestra goes walkabout on stage). The feeling of entropy is compounded by the inconsequential blues workout which follows, sluggish handclaps behind perfunctory piano. This stuff, one feels, should have stayed put in the can.

Still, at least Recommended Records, who distribute Saturn over here, have seen fit to provide *Cosmo Sun Connection* with a label, and real titles for each piece. *Children Of The Sun* lacks both, and that's not all it lacks.

Inspiration, honesty, value for money – all these qualities are in short supply here. There's yet another version of "Fate In A Pleasant Mood", plus an accompanying live rendering of "The Plan To Leave", both of which turned up on '83's *Ra To The Rescue*. (The best version of "Fate" is still the eponymous Impulse album from the early '70s; accept no substitute – if you can find it.)

The other side opens with a thunderous, mewling synth solo, a suitably scouring intro, before we slouch into more piano blues. I always think of Ra as "Sonny" on these tracks, there's a lightness, wit and humour not usually in evidence on his more intense, *aweso* pieces. There's also – and this is perhaps unavoidable, given their place in the Ra œuvre – something throwaway about them, a sense that they're the marble chippings left scattered round after Ra and the Arkestra have hewn another massive monument out of pure sound. One feels that, were they swept away, the monuments might be even more imposing in their isolation. Still, that humour and self-deprecation's an integral part of his work, and at the very least it provides another place from which to view the monuments. In a sense, Ra is his own best critic.

The bluntly-titled *Hiroshima* is the best of the three on offer here. One side opens with an exploratory shadowplay between piano and double-bass (Steve Clarke? Richard Williams? Rollo Radford?) Sometimes the lack of information on Ra's records can be quite *informating* ...). Then we're into an alto solo (Marshall Allen, presumably), followed by Gilmore's tenor taking up the solo while the Arkestra gets wilder and wilder behind, before the whole thing bows out on bowed bass fade and finally exits on percussive caps. A satisfying, organic whole, as good as anything Ra's done for several years, without ever giving you the impression that he and the band are actually stretching themselves the way they used to. More like a workout, a spot of musical aerobics for the boys.

The other side is an extended organ solo which doesn't actually end, just fades out after a while for no particular reason other than, presumably, Ra reckons you've got your money's worth. It's but a portion of a piece, an ongoing story, so to speak, and in that, very much like Ra's career. Each of his albums is likewise only a small segment of his work and personality, achieving definition and focus from its proximity to the rest of the music. The only way to come to terms with Ra, as with the other greats, the Miles, Monk and Tranes, is by large-scale immersion in the flow of his career, both crests and troughs, and even the isolated stagnant pools. Which doesn't, of course, make things any easier on the casual purchaser who's made a speculative bid for *Cosmo Sun Connection*. That's just too bad. The rest would do well to start with one of those I listed earlier, and to remember: this is not all, it's just an episode to be continued . . .

Andy Gill

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S O U N D C H E C K

SERGE CHALOFF

Blue Serge

(Affinity AFF146)

Recorded: Los Angeles, 4 March 1956.

A Handful Of Stars, The Goof And I, Thanks For The Memory, All The Things You Are, I've Got The World On A String, Sane's Blues, Stairway To The Stars
 Chaloff (bs), Sonny Clark (p), Leroy Vinnegar (b),
 Philly Joe Jones (d).

AFFINITY HAVE PUT HUMANKIND
 eternally into their debt by reissuing this record. It used to be spoken of as the finest of all baritone sax LPs, as if that were some freak class by itself, but it would be more appropriate to consider it as one of the finest of all jazz records. It's all the more remarkable that it was the work of a man stricken by spinal paralysis who would be dead a little over a year later. "We just started blowing," he said about the date; it's not a milestone of innovation, but as a portrait of a player's world this is a pinnacle of 50s jazz.



Chaloff was a difficult man, early ruined by drugs and by all accounts a pretty dislikeable character, but if, as Dizzy Gillespie noted, "you can't fool the horn", he must have been capable of great energy and tenderness. The fast numbers show a gumption derived from Chaloff's schooling in bop: "Sane's Blues", the double-time runs in "I've Got The World" and the nimble, almost serpentine inventions of "All The Things". He sounds nothing like Gerry Mulligan: phrases come in a battery of shapes and lengths, accents are constantly shifted. Instead of the patient swing of the cool players, Chaloff (a Bostonian, not a west coaster) could get pretty agitated. In "The Goof And I" he pelts through changes that would defeat most players and barely misjudges a step.

The ballads, though, are the employing heart of this set. Chaloff had by then synthesized his style into a drama of extreme contrasts — whispering phrases suddenly breaking out into cries, a wide vibrato employed with perfect control, melodies mentioned with a kind of reluctance. The result is softly overwhelming. The finale of "Stairway To The Stars", one of the most peaceful resolutions on record, is striking enough, but "Thanks For The Memory" is almost heartbreaking (the pathos of Chaloff's personal situation and this choice of tune is, of course, dangerously difficult to avert). Sonny Clark's final gesture here continues to strike me as ridiculous, and while the rhythm section play well throughout, their solos only make one impatient for Chaloff's return. Otherwise, this is a flawless record.

Richard Cook

**ALBERT COLLINS, ROBERT CRAY,
JOHNNY COPELAND**

Showdown

(Sonet SNTF 954)

Recorded: Chicago, 1985.

T-Bone Shuffle, The Moon Is Full, Louie's Dew, She's Into Something, Bring Your Fine Self Home, Black Cat Boogie, The Dream, Albert's Alley, Blackjazz
 Collins, Cray, Copeland (v, g), Collins (bsax), Allen Barnes (org), Johnny B. Gayden (b), Casey Jones (d)

BLUES "SUPER SESSIONS" OVER THE
 years have had a habit of turning out as curate's eggs rather than the double-yolkers which, given the talents assembled in the studio, they should have been. Chess's Super Blues efforts of the 60s are a case in point. A more recent obstacle to such sessions has been that very few of the great stars of the genre are still with us: indeed, five years ago a recording such as this one would have been almost unthinkable.

But now Albert Collins, the Texan with the bleak, sheet-metal Telecaster style, who's been near the top of the blues tree for years, has been joined in prominence by Johnny Copeland, ex-soul singer turned forceful and eloquent singer/guitarist, and, more remarkably, by Robert Cray, a mere stripling barely out of his 20s, whose commercial success has sometimes been equalled by his artistic merits. Last year, in the face of contractual improbability, the three went into the studio together, backed by an experienced Chi-town rhythm section, and cut this LP live.

Reviewers are supposed to balance the strengths and weaknesses of a record objectively. This reviewer has done just that and can thus tell you that Showdown is an absolute honey. From the opening track, a loping revival of T-Bone Walker's "Shuffle", it's obvious that the apparent camaraderie of the trio of blues stars isn't going to stop them from striking sparks off each other as they vie to squeeze the most dazzling and pungent solos from their axes.

Throughout the nine tracks, the format is similar: vocals and solos are exchanged within each number. Fortunately, Bruce Iglaer exercises a firm enough production hand to prevent the proceedings from degenerating into mere extended jams: each number is just and to the point.

To name highlights is neither easy nor perhaps desirable, such is the consistent excellence of the modern blues on display. However, this reviewer, a confirmed Albert Collins nut, would make particular mention of "The Dream", a slow blues on which the man's lashing solo complements Cray's disturbed lyrics, and "Albert's Alley", one of those timeless Collins shuffles where Copeland, guesting on the middle solo, cheekily quotes phrases from Collins' first hit "Frosty".

May we have Volume Two, please?

Mike Atherton

PARIS REUNION BAND

French Cooking

(Sonet SNTF 945)

Recorded: Stockholm, 3 July 1985.

Kiosk's Theme, Sweet Love Of Mine, The Barber, Waltz, Callitewhawhawhaw

Nathus Davis (ts, ss, fl), Johnny Griffin (ts), Woody Shaw, Dizzy Reece (t), Slide Hampton (tb), Kenny Drew (p), Jimmy Woode (b), Billy Brooks (d).

EIGHT US EXPATRIATES, ALL

resident in Paris at various times in the 60s, regroup to produce a more mature but no less exuberant version of the bebop music they were playing together two decades ago.

These are eight very strong instrumentalists, and a front line of five horns means that no one gets the chance to really take off and develop an extensive solo. commendably, the better-known names like Griffin and Shaw play a relatively subdued role: the rhythm section of Woode and Brooks comes across very strongly, and it is Nathan Davis who most shines as a soloist, his soprano wailing high on "Sweet Love Of Mine" and "Waltz", the flute digging cannily into Griffin's "Callitewhawhawhaw".

The record, in fact, summles along nicely; but pleasant as it is, and useful as it is for bringing names like Davis and Woode to public attention, I have to say that the LP, if only through lack of space, doesn't really do justice to any of its participants. Better LPs by the likes of Drew, Shaw and Griffin are easily available, but to hear the best of Nathan Davis, to hear just what a giant he is, you'll either have to catch the band live or wait for the reissue of LPs like *The Hip Walk, Live At The Schola Cantorum and Sixth Sense Of The 11th House*. That would be a feast of true *cordon bleu* quality. No, make that *sacré bleu!*

Graham Lock

JIMMY REED**I'm The Man Down There**

(Charly CCB 1082)

Recorded: Chicago, 1953–1965

I Recorded My Baby, Roll And Rambou, Shut My Baby, Come On Baby, Rockin' With Reed, When You Left Me, State Street Boogie, Signals Of Love/I'm The Man Down There, Tell Me You Love Me, Let's Get Together, Lookin' For You Baby, Don't Think I'm Through, When Girls Do It, Left Handel Woman, A New Lost
 Reed (v, g); no other personnel details.

IN THE SPRINGTIME OF BRITISH

blues appreciation, Jimmy Reed was a god. His reputation placed him in the top handful of the Chicago blues elite and his early UK issues seemed to confirm him as an innovator with a spare and hypnotic style, drawled vocals smeared over insistent walking bass. Then, as the Vee Jay catalogue received a thorough airing, Reed's stylistic limitations became more evident. His records were seen as following a very similar format and — worst of all — as having lyrics that were sentimental and even sticky. Reed's image has never really recovered from its eclipse in the 60s.

For all that, no blues collection is complete without his work. This LP illustrates many of the reasons for a success which was as much the responsibility of the recording company as the artist. Vee Jay were remarkable in that their quest for sales didn't lead to dilution or parody.

The first five tracks date from 1953–55 and display Reed with an unformed style and rural roots. These unself-conscious tracks are particularly pleasing. "Come On Baby" is as good a record as Reed ever made, a prototype wailing blues embellished by trilling piano and sweetly easy harmonica.

From 1955 on, production becomes more

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evident and Reed's style crystallizes. Echo is customarily added, and voice and accompaniment are increasingly separated. Contrast is increased by piercing high note harmonica work and by the occasional use of tremolo guitar, as in the very fine "Don't Think I'm Through". The result, at best, has a haunting and dramatic simplicity.

Although it came to be achieved at some cost. The two 1964 titles have backings by Hubert Sumlin, Eddie Taylor and Johnny Jones, but no use is made of their virtuoso abilities — and this was characteristic. The background remains scarcely distinguishable from many of the later records of the 1960s are musically uninteresting they are often lyrics sharper.

Out of Charly's four LPs of Reed's Vee Jay material, this is the best buy.

Dave Cunningham

RICHARD WILLIAMS

New Horn In Town
(Candid CS 9003, distributed by Black Lion)
Recorded: New York, 27 September 1960.
I Can Dream, Can't I, I Remember Clifford, Ferris Wheel, Rawson Notes; Blow In A Quandary, Over The Rainbow, Renita's Boogie
Williams (ct), Leo Wright (as, fl), Richard Wyands (p), Reginald Workman (b), Bobby Thomas (d).

ALL PRAISE TO BLACK LION FOR restoring these Candid recordings to the available catalogue and for providing a chance to hear again one of jazz trumpet's unsung heroes. Still too often consigned to the box marked "Fars Navarro" and forgotten, Williams (who died of cancer late last year) was best known for his work with Mingus and Yusef Lateef, stern and quirky taskmasters. Certainly, there's a hint of Navarro in the very ease of his playing at all tempos, but there are other, more distinctive and idiosyncratic elements, not least a harmonic subtlety and quickness of response.

The faster tracks "Renita's Bounce" and "Raucous Notes" (a high school nickname apparently) bring out the best in the whole quintet and, as always, expose its sole serious weak link, the heavy artillery drumming of Bob Thomas. Workman is, well, workmanlike at the bass and blends well with Richard Wyands' churchy piano. The two horns adapt better than the rhythm section to the more sophisticated settings and there's a hint more pull than push on the unresolved "Blues In A Quandary" and Wyands' marvelous "Ferris Wheel". "I Can Dream, Can't I?" is one of the loveliest of all standards, brought into the repertoire by Clifford Brown but rarely given an outing these days. It's a strangely closed-off, inwardly turning melody, which may explain why it has been less than popular for big blowing sessions. For a right-knit unit like this, however, it's tailor-made and a perfect medium for the leader.

Williams doesn't come on with the usual brashness and aggression of new guns in town. He seems most at ease in more thoughtful settings and could sound mawkish were it not for the big, brassy, pealing tone he gets. Golson's eulogy to Clifford Brown gets as clearly enunciated a reading as you'll hear, nothing spare, nothing wasted, simple and direct.

There isn't that much Richard Williams stuff around on record. New listeners should definitely start here.

Brian Morton

BILL FRISSELL—VERNON REID

Smash & Scatteration
(Mimo Music 005)
Recorded: New York, December 1984.
Landscape In Alternative History, Sixty 10-And-A-Half Smacks, Amarillo, Barbados, Last Night Of Party, Barbers Of Dreams, Dark Skins, Fr. Fr., Frissell, Small Hands, Black Light
Bill Frisell and Vernon Reid (g, g-synth, synth).

THE RECENT DEBATE BETWEEN JOHN Abercrombie and R.D. Cook on the validity or otherwise of the guitar synthesizer is settled at a stroke and for all time by *Smash & Scatteration*. Abercrombie's instrument's unresponsiveness merely reflects on the non-transferable nature of his essentially old-fashioned jazz technique (which I also enjoy, I should add). The same is true for Metheny and McLaughlin. They are unable to "be themselves" on guitar synth. Reid and Frisell do not have that problem; the trademark of each has been the range of his imagination, rather than any one stylized sound.

Shannon Jackson's discography testifies to Reid's abilities as an arranger-in-action, much of its uniqueness derives from Vernon's generous and unpredictable splashes of colour. Reid'll bring out the bango when you expect the Strat, and vice versa. A knock-out, dynamic player, a hip, witty mind, Frisell's dynamism is of a different order, the turnover of ideas slower yet relentless. He plays like a force of nature, a zephyr with an option on a squall, his sound comes out of nowhere, charges, retreats. The guitar synthesizer could have been designed with Frisell in mind — it merely allows him to extend the work he was already doing with electric guitar and echo.

Together, he and Reid have made a thoroughly modern album. The bastardized hoedown of "Sneaks" and the take-that-Django attitude of " . . . Paris" are seriously quirky "Black Light", "Landscapes" and "Dark Skin" proceed where "Future Shock" balked; they put the *hard* in hardware, wailing, drum machines akimbo. And there are two amazing solo pieces. Reid's "Burden Of Dreams", which concretizes the Coltrane/Hendrix connection, ecstatic, eyes-upturned. And "Fr. Fr. Frissell", a stuttering guitar-synth masterpiece, Bill hammering harmonics and untangling note clusters. Jazz's future starts here.

Steve Lake



GENE SHAW SEXTET

Debut In Blues
(Argo ARC 501)
Recorded: Chicago, July 1963.
Debut In Blues, Karaoke, The Gentle Present, Who Says Get It Blue, Thieves Carnival, Not Too Cool, Who Knows?, Travelling
Shaw (t); Herb Wise (tb); Jay Petres (ts); James Taylor (p); Sidney Robinson (b); Gerold Donovan (d).

CLARENCE EUGENE SHAW IS THE epitome of the cult musician. The tiny number of records he made suggest a rare sensibility: his trumpet was lyrical in the fashion of a player like Bobby Hackett, but his ideas about phrasing and time were unquestionably modern, disjointed by the suspicion he found in his material, and his music is something of a paradox without once seeming awkward — he was a very sure musician.

His reputation stands largely on the extraordinary playing he put into Charles Mingus' *East Coasting* and *Tijuana Mood*, but he also made two LPs as a leader for Argo — exceedingly scarce and very sought-after records. The reissue of *Debut In Blues*, though, won't add many to his following; like its companion record *Breakthrough*, it's actually not much good. Shaw's interior style requires him to feed off an exciting group, and the band here as a set of deserved unknowns — they've nothing to say that's their own, and the music dwelles in cliché. Shaw himself plays well enough, if never to the standard of his work with Mingus — he puts together a mild exotica in "Karachi" which sounds weird next to his companions' ideas, and finds a sober merriment in "Thieves Carnival" But considering the scope of his gifts, Shaw on record is a frustrating soul.

Richard Cook

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S O U N D C H E C K

OUT OF THE BLUE

O.T.B.

(Blue Note BT 85118)

Recorded: Van Gelder Studios, 7/8 June 1985.

RH Factor, Eastern Love Village, Oxford, Revisited, Git In There, Blue Highs, O T B

Michael Philip Mossman (tr, fltr), Kenny Garrett (as), Ralph Bowen (ts), Harry Pickens (p), Robert Hurst (b), Ralph Peterson (d).

CONTRARY TO EXPECTATION, THIS New York "Neo-Bop" thing (ugh!) is giving us something of a smooth ride. Digital techniques make for recording as sleek as a well-run BMW, the elegance of it all fashioning a caress out of what might have been (in more romantic dreams) a slap in the face. What can we expect? This is the 80s, an age of upward mobility, visible earnings and good taste. The starvation aesthetic in music is largely a thing of (Blue Note's) past, and thankfully so. But still, I have a strong feeling that something is missing from this un-funky non-party. Could it be that hint of danger snarked up with anxiety that we so freely associate with the urban jazz tradition? As we to readjust our ideas to a new corpus of ideal noses: ones that slip quietly from the penthouse and into the motor with barely a downward glance at the pavement below? The Hip-Hop crew would say yeah, man, and you can keep it!

Out Of The Blue look and sound like products of a conservative system: nice smiles, good tailoring, lots of hope. Their music is a bright aggregation of educated ideas; chock-full of received notions about how to be boppish, but lacking that all-important spark of tearful urgency and flair. Each man sounds well-prepared for the crew of this record, the front-line stripped down and fit, but — if you'll excuse the metaphor — there's an awful lot of jinking around the edge of the area without much penetration to its heart. You'd think they were playing for England.

Perhaps the difficulty lies in the service. Much of the material lacks identity in the same way that late-50s hard-bop heads often seemed all of a piece. Oh for a zazzy tune, a deep mood even. You get the impression char, save two (Garrett's languid "Eastern Love Village" and Hurst's almost-dirty "Git In There"), these tunes are just devices to get everyone blowing. That oft-used cliché from days gone by, "conception", seems to be the missing ingredient. To make music, there must be something to say.

Garrison, with his lemming tone and scurrying phrases, is the most interesting soloist. Bowen the most exciting — particularly on "Reunited" where he sounds remarkably like *Blue Train*-period Coltrane. Mossman on trumpet is the callowest show in town, too many of his lines burning out after a promising start, while Pickens is occasionally pleasantly post-Hancock. Bass and drum do more or less what you'd expect.

As a showcase for some of the generation sucked into the Mansalis brothers' slipstream, O.T.B. tells us quite a lot. First, that there is a plethora of very young players (all of this bunch are in their early 20s) with the basic chops and motivation to re-activate a tradition. Second, that these players have a long way to go yet. But third, finally and more

importantly, that traditions are not re-activated with theory or merely by "rebelling against the pretensions of the so-called avant-garde and the cynical submissions to fusion", as Stanley Crouch fumes in yet another familiarly rabid liner-note, but by getting down to the roots of music, its human pulse, its pre-musical dimension. It's a lot to ask when historical contexts differ, but to do anything else would be merely to re-invent the tradition. Keep at it, you guys.

Nick Coleman

BIG JOE TURNER

I Don't Dig It

(Jukebox Lil JB 618)

Recorded: New York/Los Angeles/Baton Rouge, 1940-1949.

Gun To Chicago Blues; I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Blues In The Night, Rock Is My Bid, Sun Rain Blues, Mardi Gras Boogie, Cry Baby Blues, Rainy Weather Blues, I Don't Dig It, Boogie Woogie Baby, My Heart Belongs To You, Born To Gamble, I Love Ya, I Love Ya, Ooo-Ouch-Say, Wind I Had A Dollar, Fuzzy Wuzzy Honey.

Big Joe Turner (vc) with various accompanists.

WHEN BIG JOE TURNER DIED LAST

November, the blues lost one of its most distinctive shouters. Through 45 years of recording, Joe always projected an expansive joie-de-vivre, ranged with just a hint of melancholy. During his declining years, Joe began to get the recognition he deserved: you know you've arrived when your obituary appears in *The Guardian*.

His place in history is secure, reflected by the number of LPs available, covering the whole of his career. In sales terms, his greatest success came in the 50s, when Atlantic revived his flagging career and made him an unlikely rock'n'roll star: imagine Joe, six feet two and weighing 250 pounds, belting out "Teenage Letter" at the age of 46. For all their incongruity, his Atlantic tracks still sound among his best, for their sheer driving energy.

That energy remained constant throughout Joe's career. The period represented here has been covered on other LPs but, while this may be a gap-filler, it's by no means a barrel-scraping. These are some of Joe's rarest and finest tracks. Whether he's bouncing in front of a trio or rocking in from of an eight-piece orchestra, he rarely sounded better. On half-a-dozen tracks he's accompanied by Peter Johnson's magnificent boogie piano, the same piano which kicked off his career back in Kansas City in the 30s. For the rest, the band is always on the ball, whether it be the cocktail hour blues of white pianist Freddie Slack or the thrilling guitar/piano combination of the Lorenzo Flesnoy Trio.

The quality of the music is matched by a gorefest sleeve featuring detailed notes and wonderful photos of Joe sporting some courageous ties. He may not have been the most introspective bluesman, but his slurring good humour and irresistible drive make his music something to treasure.

Nick Kimberley

DONALD BYRD

Free Form

(Blue Note BST 84118)

Recorded: 1961.

*Pentecostal Feeling, Night Flower, Naz Naz, French**Spur, Free Form.*

Byrd (tr), Wayne Shorter (ts), Herbie Hancock (p), Butch Warren (b), Billy Higgins (d).

WAYNE SHORTER STEALS THE

limelight on this album, whether through his restless probing on the up-tempo numbers or his patient mood-building on the ballad. Byrd has an admirably clear tone, but lacks Shorter's inventive intensity.

"Pentecostal Feeling" demonstrates this contrast perfectly: "...an attempt to distil what [Byrd] remembers of his Sundays in church when he was growing up", it is a brisk opener with a vigorous sharp-edged solo from Byrd followed by a fiercely thoughtful offering from Shorter. The Hancock ballad "Night Flower" brings out the more reflective side of Byrd, but again it is Shorter who is more absorbing — an impression confirmed by "Nai Nai", a rather banal tune brought to life by Shorter's spiralling and tumbling round the theme in a manner which irresistibly brings Coltrane to mind.

This similarity is again evident on side two's opener, "French Spice", a Byrd tune and a vehicle for Shorter's most Coltraneish improvisation: fierce clusters of notes obsessively returning to the theme and then tumbling away again. It is disappointing that Byrd dissipates the energy built up by Shorter with a rather lacklustre solo, despite the insistent urging of Higgins and the patient seeking of Warren. The mood is further calmed by a sweet but insipid solo from Hancock relying on somewhat bland chords rather than communing itself to an examination of the tune's possibilities. The title track is an intriguing experiment where Higgins's drumming bears no temporal relation to the work of the front line or rhythm section — in Byrd's words: "[it's] just there as a percussive pattern, but not present as a mark of the time". Higgins rattles away on cowbell and muted drums and hi-hat while Byrd and Shorter solo above him and Hancock ripples uneasily in the background. Again Shorter outshines Byrd here, taking full advantage of the freedom the form of the piece gives him to build a rich and complex pattern of sound.

The Byrd/Shorter partnership here inevitably brings to mind the Morgan/Shorree pairing on *The Giselle* (see WIRE 24). The conclusion is the same: Shorter is more satisfying, ultimately, because he is more reflective.

Chris Parker

IRENE SCHWEIZER

Live At Taktlos

(Inakustik Records 001)

Recorded: Taktlos Festival, Zurich, 4/5 February 1984.

*First Meeting, Lang And Leg, Waiting 2, Trainwreck**Iggy!, Every Now And Then . . .*

Irene Schweizer (p), Lindsay Cooper (p), George Lewis (tb), Joelle Leandre (b, v), Gunter Sommer (perc), Paul Lovens (perc), Maggie Nicols (v).

EDDIE PRÉVOST QUARTET

Continuum

(Matchless Recordings MR7)

Recorded: Bracknell Festival, 3 July 1983.

Larry Stabbins (ts, sa), Veryan Weston (p), Marcus Marzou (b), Eddie Prevost (dr).

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EDDIE PREVOST, WRITING IN THE recent AIM pamphlet *Improvisation: History, Directions, Practice*, makes the point that it is erroneous to think of improvisation as being "non-idiomatic". These LPs, I think, take that argument a step further: here are two examples of total improvisation which nevertheless inhabit recognizable stylistic and/or emotional areas, which operate within modes of playing that refer to particular and separate historical/political contexts.

Lise At Taktils demonstrates the improvisational approach adopted in Europe by the Feminist Improvising Group - although the presence of George Lewis on one track prompts the realization that FIG reclaimed many of the musical values pioneered a decade earlier by players from the AACM: I'm thinking of elements like theatricality and humour, the use of "little instruments", an emphasis on silence/space as part of the total dynamic, of qualities like quietness and intimacy. In brief, a more basic and personal music than those surrounding it.

These similarities are possibly rooted in the fact that both groups sought to create a new musical language, as from scratch, in FIG's case, presumably, to make possible a music with which women could feel comfortable, could call their own; in the AACM's case, to develop an alternative to the relentless intensity of New York-based energy music, which had become the dominant mode of mid-60s music.

Whatever the historical links and overlaps (I've only scratched the surface), Irene Schweizer and George Lewis seem to strike up

an instant affinity on "First Meeting", and maintain almost telepathic reciprocity through the abrupt switches of pace and mood in their ten-minute duo. It's a brilliant opening to an LP which seems to me a model of its kind: flurries of activity spaced between warm exchanges and sudden, deflating quietisms, all performed with consummate artistry and a high sense of fun. The second side, featuring Schweizer, Joelle Leandre and Paul Lovens, is a marvellous triologue of musical subtleties and shifting emotions, with Leandre's amazing vocalise - from operatic scat to barehouse growls - often deployed to hilarious effect.

Centauras too, I think, is an excellent record of (very different) kind. I may be on shaker ground here, but I'd locate this music in a European experimental continuum (no pun intended) which remains aligned to the energy music of the 60s, particularly as practised by John Coltrane and Albert Ayler. Certainly it sounds to me a very restless, agitated music, densely textured, with few breaks in either its pace or level of intensity, a veritable tangle of energies. The intent here, though, is not the spiritual questing of Coltrane or Ayler, but - at least for Prevost (and going by his writing in *Improvisation*) - to demonstrate, or experience, improvisation as a political paradigm, music as a model for human interaction and collective problem-solving. (The fact that FIG members would probably agree with the analogy, yet still produce a markedly different set of musical values leads to all kinds of intriguing complexities I don't have the space to explore here: disappointingly, *Improvisation* ignores the

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question of d/b/a gender and musical language are related.)

I'm perhaps being wise after the event, but *Catinman*'s music does seem to reflect very directly its seriousness of purpose: this is a rigorous music, very intent on *dialing* with things, with little space for relaxation or triviality. It is also, I should add, superbly performed. If the emotional colours of *Live At Taktils* are the ones I'd prefer to nod to my mast, this is more to do with personal/political choices than with strictly musical criteria. As Eddie Prevost concludes in the AIM pamphlet: "In assessing the value of an improvisation the audience evaluates itself."

Graham Lock

L. Improvisation: History, Directions, Practice is available from AIM, 35 Kenton Road, London SW11 1XH, price £1.80 (inc p&p).

LORNE LOFSKY/ED BICKERT

The Quartet Of Lorrie Lofsky And Friend/The Quartet Of Ed Bickert And Friend (Unison DDA1002)

Recorded: Toronto - 27 January 1985
Morning Star, I Remember You, Part Of Spain, Falling Grace, The Cobblers, Bitterness, Up With The Lark, Crazy, She Calls Me, Boom And The Boys,
Lofsky, Bickert (g), Neil Swanson (b), Jerry Fuller (d)

THIS HAS TWO TITLES BECAUSE ONE side of the sleeve carries Lofsky's name with a photograph showing him facing the camera, with Bickert turning his back to us; and the other side is vice versa. Records like this, with guitars doing nearly all the soloing, can be

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deadly dull. An awful example is *Great Guitars At The Winery* (Concord CJ 141), where Byrd, Ellis and Kessel go on and interminably on, and only from the bursts of applause can you tell where one solo ends and another begins.

Certainly the format tends to blandness, though here both Lofsky and Buckert are sufficiently alert to avoid this, and bass and drums keep things moving nicely in the background, above all in Sam Jones's "Bittersuite", which probably has the LP's best improvising from the guitarists. In fact all four participants are very musical, play excellently, and are finely recorded. Lofsky is on the left-hand channel, Buckert on the right, Swanson and Fuller in between, and although the guitarists' ideas are similar there are adequate differences between them. Buckert is sometimes the more cogent, as in "Morning Star", the longest track, though I like the way both solo at once on "Cupbearers". Bass and drums are absent from "I Remember You", which leads to fuller counterpoint between the guitars with the original melody never stated directly until the end. Real sensibility is expressed in this piece, and more opportunity should have been taken to explore the textural and colouristic potential of this instrumentation instead of usually having just one man blowing accompanied by the other three.

Max Harrison

natural tone than Wachsmann. The trio explore common pitches, move together rather than in competition, opposition or counterpoint.

The album's title, a coincidence and afterthought, is a good one. It sounds like love – a makeshift sort of harmony, quietly getting on with the job, the crockery thrown around only intermittently. Floridis, finally, is excellent on clarinet, taking the measure of both his classical training and national folk roots and combining them in an unpedantic, discreet manner. It would be interesting to hear him attempt a solo clarinet album, an exercise that would oblige him to be less backward about coming forward and provide a *pro tempore* blueprint of his intentions.

Steve Lake



DISTRICT SIX

Leave My Name At The Door
(Wave 29)

Recorded: Bass Clef, London, 12 October 1985.
Leave My Name At The Door, The Nasusus One, Is Our Hand, Hangar, Koko, Drums For Nature (Margurite Jim Dvorak (t, penny whistle, v, perc), Harrison Smith (saxes, t, Mervyn Africa (p, perc, v), Dall Karz (b), Beris Abrahams (d, v).

THIS FEELS MORE SUBSTANTIAL THAN Floridis' quartet recording of the previous year. There, despite an obvious affinity between the Greek reedman and Paul Lytton, it was difficult not to think how Evan Parker might have responded in the same context. Parker's imprint has got into Floridis' soprano and there's still some lingering Dolphy to be heard from the alto. These details matter much less than this open-sounding performance of what amounts to improvised chamber music.

The compatibility of the Chang/Fisher axis forms a safety net and inspires confidence. Skirted nerve pulse playing is at a premium, the music takes the time it needs to unfold. At least this is the illusion given by the apparent effortlessness of Charig's technical ability. Trumpet players, it seems, are graded only on personal charisma. The famous are swankies (careful, proof-reader) or haunted poets, while British jazz has hatched a long line of intensely musical and undramatic non-stars. Mark is the best of them, and more. It's *passé* even to think in terms of cutting contests, but in another age I'd have backed him, unhesitatingly, against Dr Bowes. But I ramble. Back in the Amore Theatre, Taya Fisher sounds wonderful, not much like other improvising fiddlers, nor spiky or nigglingly abrasive like Jenkins/Bang. Unafraid to be simple and direct, Fisher also seems more concerned with the instrument's

The outstanding player, in fact, is Abrahams himself. He reminds me a little of Milford Graves, treating the trap set as a rainforest of noise and seldom settling for a straightforward pulse. Listen to how he whips the band through "In Our Hands" while still managing to conjure a different response for each of the soloists. Dvorak and Smith play sparkily without leaving much on the memory, and

Africa scuttles around everybody's heels. I think we will always call Dill Katz "solid".

"Ilanga" pulls a bit on record, elemental African song rather out of kilter with the rest. Otherwise, the music provides a forceful engagement.

Richard Cook

PETER KING QUINTET

90% Of One Per Cent

(Spotlight SPJ 529)

Recorded: University College Oxford, 26 May, 1984.

Old Folks, V, Peace, Eye Of The Hurricane, Gingerbread Boy.

Peter King (as), Henry Lowther (t), John Horler (p), Dave Green (b), Spike Wells (d).

ENGLAND'S UNDER-RECORDED ALTO star at last gets the chance to stretch out on his own live LP, and the result is a fine sample of the best in post-bop traditionalism.

King comes across in truly imperious style; his sure, fluid alto coasts through a measured "Old Folks" and the lyrical "V, Peace", galvanizes a merely squally "Eye Of The Hurricane", then leads the band into a barnstorming finale with "Gingerbread Boy". For all the latter's dash, it's his work on side one's quieter pieces that impresses most: the light touch, deft phrasing and perfect facility make "Old Folks" and "V, Peace" unalloyed pleasures.

I'm less enamoured of Henry Lowther's rather pinched tone and edgy solos, but the rhythm section prove both solid and sensitive, matching the leader's penchant for unfussy agility. John Horler, though not in his best solo form, has several inspired dialogues with King, and in "V, Peace", a dedication to late pianist Bill Evans, also provides the LP's most attractive tune.

If you like the record, I'd also recommend its predecessors, *New Beginnings* and *East 34th Street* (still, I think, my favourite Peter King LP). That he's recorded only three LPs as leader in more than 25 years of playing is a terrible indictment of the British music business (as if they cared!). Now, with his talents at last so richly displayed, there will hopefully be many more records to come.

Graham Lock

JAKI BYARD AND THE APOLLO STOMPERS

Phantasm

(Soul Note SN 1075)

Recorded: New York, 25–26 September 1984
I May Be Wrong, Madley – Black & Tan Fantasy, Prelude No. 29, Prelude To A Kiss, Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me, One Way To My Wife, V, Madley – Take 3, Cross Quarts Boogie Woogie, Take Five, Madley – Landy Woman, So What, Impression, Clear Vuut, Some Other Spring, It's Too Late, Trevor, Lover Man
Roger Parrot, Al Bryant, John Eckert, Jim White (t); Steve Weisberg, Steve Swell, Carl Remmler, Bob Nordsen (tb), Bob Torrence, Manny Boyd (as), Ted Levy, Al Givens (ts), Preston Trombley (bs), Dan Leche (g), Ralph Humphrey (b), Richard Allen (d), Deniece Byard, Diane Byard (v), Jako Byard (p, coh).

I SUPPOSE IT WOULD BE UNFAIR TO call Jaki Byard one of jazz's great eccentrics, but then again, perhaps not. Certainly his humour, imagination and spectacular sense of

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S O U N D C H E C K

the theatrical have given immense pleasure in a variety of contexts, not less as *evident grace* and perky polymorph to younger generations of musicians. Terrific piano player too.

Phantasia is the first in a projected series of LPs documenting the history of the big band in both material and arrangement. No surprise, then, that it's a rather arid affair. When you cover 17 themes in a shade over 40 minutes then you leave yourself with little scope for really stretching the band in a truly musical sense – beyond solving the mechanical problems of getting it all in and in recognizable shape. Only "Lover Man" clocks in at more than five minutes' duration and that time is largely devoted to featuring the distinctly facile guitar of Dan Lach.

So many promising moments go unfulfilled. The Ellington-based medley opens well only to be let down by hesitant playing and some rather less than memorable singing by Diane Byard in "Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me". So too over on side two where a solo bass introduces "Lucille Woman" (aha, you think, some real dynamics) only to be washed away by a stodgy over-arrangement of "So What". My feeling precisely.

Perhaps the best moments on the album come from the still-nimble fingers of the maestro himself, but these are few and far between. If Byard had allowed his wit and eccentricity to colour the shapes on *Phantasia* a little more, then we might have had something more than a rather pallid attempt to redecorate history.

Nick Coleman

only Eldridge and the leader have any real solo space. Barnet's approximations of Hodges – on soprano, alto and tenor alike – are agreeable, but Eldridge is the memorable thing here, offering the sort of laconic blistering that Armstrong and Gillespie refined in their big bands.

"It Don't Mean A Thing" is a mostly vocal but of fun with Anita Love; "Wild Driver", made in Paris in 1950 by a quartet, has a distorted compression of swing licks in a grand manner. Here and in "Organ Grinder's Swing" it makes you wonder if anyone (aside from Coors Williams) ever played muted trumpet with the pressure-cooker fury that Eldridge sustains. "After You've Gone" and "Rockin' Chair" are from a *Tonight* broadcast with a big band – the first is a bit vaudevillian, but the second balances intimate little growls and a stratospheric reach with real mastery.

The meat of the record is in the first five tracks – Eldridge, Emmett Berry and Joe Thomas soloing over a rhythm section headed by Johnny Guarnieri, who offers a clever pastiche of the young Basie. The three trumpeters treat it as neither cutting contest nor an opportunity to show off: each tune has a string of memorable improvisations played with infectious good humour, brash and exciting and always just slightly more than mere crowd-pleasing. Eldridge takes his mure in and out and still sounds inimitable, even alongside two brother stylists

Richard Cook

HORACE TAPSCOTT

The Tapscott Sessions, Volume Five
(Nimbus Records NS 1925)

Recorded: January 1984.

Strangeems, I'll Have One When It's Over, Blues In Pirouette, Perfume In The Night, Hy-Pockets' Swan Song.

Horace Tapscott (p).

CURTIS CLARK

Deep Sea Diver
(Nimbus Records NS 3580)

Recorded: March 1984.

Rawhiss Over Harlen, Cosmic Minimalist, Deep Sea Diver, Farewell Good Sport, Broken Mirror Reflections, Amy Yezne, Rawhiss Over Harlen.

Curtis Clark (p), Merlene Holsey (v – on one track only)

CURTIS CLARK – ROBERTO MIRANDA – SONSHIP THEUS

Phantasmagoria
(Nimbus Records NS 3368)

Recorded: Los Angeles, January 1984.

Phantasmagoria, Bouquet, Missing Person, Thought Of One.

Curtis Clark (p, d); Roberto Miranda (b); Sonship Theus (d).

SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1978, NIMBUS records, a small independent label based in Santa Barbara, has devoted itself to re-recording the West Coast's more creative music. Probably producer Tom Albach's most significant act has been to document the work of Horace Tapscott and his Pan Afrikan People's Orchestra, a source of musical inspiration and integrity in the Los Angeles area for the last two decades. Tapscott is one of the most neglected figures in American music,

however, as I outlined his history while reviewing the first four records of *The Tapscott Sessions* in *WIRE* 19, I'll be brief here about the latest addition to this projected 15-LP series.

Volume Five reaffirms that Tapscott is both gifted composer and sensitive pianist, happy to delve into the piano for "Strangeums", yet equally at home in the tradition on "Blues In Pirouette" and "Hy-Pockets' Swan Song", two charming foxtails into a personal, tenely crafted blues. As on previous records, he avers his commitment to community values by including the work of an unknown local composer, and Samuel Browne's "Perfumes In The Night" is perhaps the LP's most attractive track, a dark, lilting tune with a distinctly Tapscottian feel to its gently potent lyricism.

There are similar qualities to be found in the music of Curtis Clark, a pianist best known from his recordings with David Murray, and from his trips to continental Europe. His too is a muse of quiet strengths: cool and calm, it walks with spirit. *Deep Sea Diver* is a very satisfying record; if the titles hint at romanticism, the playing is scrupulously bereft of false sentiment. Reflective and economical it certainly is, though, and with a finely tuned sense of dynamics, highlights are the droll time games of "Cosmic Minutels", the leaps and ripples of "Deep Sea Diver" itself.

Phantasmagoria, dedicated to the memory of Jeff Reynolds, Harry Miller and Joep Maessen, is nearly as good. Its weak spot is "Missing Persons", on which Clark plays clarinet with a lacklustre tone that fails to meet the liveliness of either tune or rhythm duo. But the title track, which fills side one, is a temperature ebb and flow of deft ideas, with strong solos from each of the trio, while the lovely "Bouquet" slowly opens out into a carefree Latin breeze, then relapses into delicate sound petals.

It seems Nimbus still have no UK distributor, so you'll have to write to Box 205, Santa Barbara, Ca 93102, to get these LPs. Two things I'm sure of: that Tom Albach has a good ear for piano records, and that their absence from our shops is a crying shame.

Graham Lock

ALEXANDER VON SCHLIPPENBACH & PAUL LOVENS

,Stranger Than Love
(Po Torch PTK/JWD 12)

Recorded: Berlin, 17 June 1984

,Stranger Than Love (Part 1 & 2).

Schlippenbach (p), Lovens (d, perc).

ANYONE WHO DOUBTS THE continuing vitality of this now mature area of free music should get their hands on a copy of *Stranger Than Love* forthwith. Paul and Alex know each other well, but they've never recorded just as a duo; although the pianist has made several LPs with drummer Sven Ake Johansson. The difference between those duets and this one is severe: with Johansson, the music advances in great blocks, not unlike the multi-dimensional structures of Cecil Taylor, but with Lovens the music is phantasmagically diverse. It evolves quickly, somehow – whatever external velocities are involved – *move faster*. They wrap it up inside 34 minutes.



ROY ELDRIDGE

Little Jazz Special

(Queen Q-065)

Recorded: various locations, 1944–56

Don't Be That Way, I Want To Be Happy, Fiesta In Brazil, Si Lasso Blues (not taken) (A), If You're Mean A Thing (B), Wild Driver (C), In A Melody, Blue Moon, Gulf Coast Blues, Is There (D), After You've Gone; Rockin' Chair (E), My Blue Heaven (F)

Eldridge (tr), with His Trumpet Ensemble (A), with His Little Jazz (B), with His Orchestra (C); with Charlie Banister's Orchestra (D); with unknown bug band (E), with unknown rhythm section (F).

A MISCELLANY FULL OF INTEREST AND bursting with the scattershot flamboyance of Roy Eldridge in a good mood. These are all unusual tracks, unissued takes or transcriptions for the most part, and of the only solid link is Eldridge's trumpet that's a strong enough thread by itself. The tracks with Barnet's band are AFRS transcriptions although Buddy De Franco and Dodo Marmarosa are in the band,

B A C K I S S U E S

1.

Ran Blake; Camden on Camara; Eric Dolphy; Steve Lacy; Harold Land; Lee Records; Wynton Marsalis; Art Pepper tribute; Max Roach; Scatting & Bopping; Seven Steps to Jazz – Trumper; John Stevens Part I; Women Live & ...

Cadillac Records; Coltrane's A Love Supreme; Count Basie tribute; Ted Curson; Miles Davis concert; Festivals – Moers and La Mans; Barry Guy; Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand); Metamessage; Michel Petrucciani; Seven Steps – Bass

8.

Art Ensemble of Chicago; Benny Carter; Charly R&B; Andrew Cyrille; Manu Dibango; Leo Fender; Meredith Monk; Paul Murphy; Oliver Nelson's The Blues and the Abstract Truth; Recording Improvised Music; Trevor Watts; More Music; Where Were You in '62?

10.

Alterations; Armstrong's West End Blues; Amni Baraka; Black Masks; White Masks; Art Blakey; Borbetomagus; Jazz At The Phil reissues; Hugh Masekela; Thelonious Monk; Jerry Wexler

12.

Afro Jazz; Laurine Anderson; Gone ... But Not Forgotten – Vic Dickenson, Dennis Ross, Colin Walcott; Chris McGregor; Phil Minton-Roger Turner; New Year's Honours List; New York Ear & Eye – Gospel; Ma Rainey; Cecil Taylor; Max Roach's We Insist! Freedom Now Suite

14.

Arts Council; Harry Beckett; British Summer Time Ends; Kenny Clarke tribute; Graham Collier; Free Music Overview; Hip London Scene; Incaus Festival; Jazz Funding, London Venues; Evan Parker's Saxophone Solos; Round The Regions; John Surman; Mika Westbrook; Where Guide – Manchester; Annie Whitehead

15.

Derek Bailey, Martha & Fontella Bass; George Benson; Essential Coltrane; Charles Mingus – Piñecanthropus Erectus; Pat Metheny; Jim Mullen; Norma Winstone

16.

Anthony Braxton; Cotton Club; Peter King, Onyeakwa; Essential Dolphy; Incaus Festival; Zoot Sims; Gil Scott-Heron; Clifford Brown & Max Roach

17.

Ray Charles; John Gilmore; Herbie Nichols; Daniel Ponick; Jazz in Paris; Betty Boop; Paladin; Afro-Jazz

18.

Sonny Rollins; Bobby McFerrin; Jayne Cortez; Stanley Jordan; Tommy Chase; Bertrand Tavernier; Jon Farrell (great issue!)

19.

Onette Coleman; Charlie Haden; Steve Lacy; Boyd Rice; Slim Gaillard; Mavis Jazz; Peter Ind; Urban Sax

20.

Art Blakey; Wynton & Branford Marsalis; Bobby Watson; Hank Mobley; Ganelin Trio; Bix Beiderbecke; Impulse & Blue Note reissues

21.

Chet Baker; Cuba; Jamaladeen Tacuma; Michael Nyman; Duke Ellington; Pinaki Zoo; Mar Wilson

22.

John Coltrane; Rubin Blades; Nathan Davis; James Blood Ulmer; Depravity; Guest Stars; 23.

Bill Laswell; Anita O'Day; Charlie Watts; Loose Tubes; Cells Cruz; Matilde Santing; Lester Bowie; Donald Banks; Arto Lindsay

24.

Betty Carter; John Abercrombie; Sidney Bechet; Jimmy Smith; Maggie Nichols; Vienna Art Orchestra; Bill Evans; Zaira

25.

Young Saxophones; Courtney Pine; Tommy Smith; Ian Ballamy; Nigel Hitchcock; Paul Motian; Leslie Thompson; Luciano Berio; George Coleman; Jazz Cartoons; Chicago; New York; Duke Ellington

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W I R E

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S O U N D C H E C K

Schlippenbach seems to be going backwards, in some ways. His harmony on this occasion recalls some of his early "free jazz" recordings, and there are some of the neoclassical touches one associates with a player like Masha Mengelberg. But there's plenty of his peculiarly dry violence too - Schlippenbach loves to burrow inside the music even as he spins it out, and there's a queer two-way impression to some of this. Lowens remains as one of the marvels of free Europe: we await the first improvised videos with eagerness, because the sight of this master at work is as engrossing as the sound. The usual peaks-and-troughs of improvisation recur here, although the changes are very rapid: they try most of the loud/soft combinations in the first ten minutes and then remake and refine them for the rest, moving ever more expertly.

Some seriously pastoral moments mingle with the compressed energy music. So there are plenty of points of entry, and it's more than a fan's record. You should put it ahead of most of this month's reviewed publum.

Richard Cook

MAGGIE NICOLS/PETER NU

Nicols'n'Nu

(Leo LR 127)

Recorded: London, June, 1985
Touching Faces, *Dynamite Dream*, *Kids*, *Cloud's Blues*,
Note Leads To Another, *Moments*
 Nicols (v), Nu (p)

"MOMENTS" IS AN INVOLVING, almost painful account of a growing stronger, facing down the things most feared, overcoming shyness, lack of confidence. The voice soars and hesitates, never quite breaking loose, turning back to speech - a rich glottal London - then slipping away into those reedy soprano flights that have become Maggie Nicols' trademark.

This is her most successful territory, and she thrives on the pared-down, mutual setting provided by Nu's endlessly undogmatic piano-playing. She's a great character actress (as is he in a more abstract way) and there's a sense of catharsis in the set that even so stays well short

of psychodrama or confessional.

It's a sexy record. A real musical intimacy, as the title implies. One thing leads to another. "One Note Leads To Another" and a long, involved passage of emotion in every conceivable combination and tension. In "Kids", Nicols - as both parent's voice and child's - works through the agonies, joys, frustrations and irritations of parenthood, underlining the certain fact that however else life is, after children it's never *quiet* again. "Kids" manages to be intensely personal without being mawkish and without losing sight of more strictly musical values.

Nu is no mere accompanist. He asserts, coaches, sits back, then argues. "Moments" is as much his self-realization - or the piano's - as it is the voice's. And it is he more than Nicols who gives the whole set its shape, seguing from "Touching Faces" (which is like opening the door on strangers) into the more restrained and guardedly conventional "Dynamite Dream", and from "Kids" into the less fraught ground of "Cloud's Blues".

In the past I've found Maggie Nicols disappointing. Her contributions to Alfred Hart's *The Lamb* a year or two back revealed her shortcomings as a "pure" vocalist. Here, though, she is little short of stunning. It's an utterly convincing performance that merits steady replaying and doesn't pall a fraction. The back of the sleeve has the pair of them on a park bench feeding the birds. Charmed from the trees, doubtless.

Brian Morton

PAUL NASH

Second Impressions

(Soul Note SN1107)
 Recorded: New York City - October 1984, April 1985

Song For Lanta; New York Nature; After Words; Uplift; Intermission; It's A Few Steps From Broadway To Amsterdam; Postscript; Passing Glance, Starlit Skylight.

Tom Harrell (t), Gerard Carelli (tb), Alan Braufman (ts, as), Gregory Yasinetsky (ss, ts), Ann Yasinetzky (f, g, comp), Michael Cochrane (p); Anthony Cox (b), Jimmy Madison (d), Michele Hendricks (v).

F A S T L I C K S

the disappointing results are plausibly unremarkable. Billy Hart's drumming is very fine but his composing falls short of the stimulating - only "Waiting Inside", a mournful song, does more than drift between chords and modes. Nobody stands out as a soloist, and if it passes a pleasant 40 minutes it struggles to keep the attention.

Richard Cook

CHEB BAKER: Chet's Choice (Criss Cross 1016). Chet's choice this time is to play a reliable set of his favourite tunes with Philip Catherine (g) and Jean-Louis Rassinfosse (b). There are a few new twists: "If I Should Lose You" clips along at plenty over its usual pace, and thus "Love For Sale" is slacker but more risky than the one Baker recorded, in roughly the same arrangement, with Doug Raney and Nils Pedersen. Catherine is a player I previously had down as a bit of a romantic fop, but he's restless with energy here - lines that chase the trumpeter into his best form, applying a bite that Baker's groups seldom allow. Chet's choice for quite a while.

Richard Cook

BILLY HART: Oshumare (Gramavision 18-8502-D). There's a crush of stellar players on this record - Branford M., Steve Coleman, guitarists Frisell and Eubanks, Didier Lockwood, Kenny Kirkland, gee whiz! - but

COOKIE & THE CUPCAKES: Cookie & The Cupcakes (Ace CH 142). Huey "Cookie" Thieury and his accomplices were the archetypal exponents of the Louisiana Smiling Steamroller Sound, a swampy r&b lash-up of rolling rhythms, clanking piano, droning saxes and anguished lilting vocals. They're well served by this collection of their late 50s and early 60s cuts, including the delightfully ponderous ballad "Marthilda" and hoonailed

THOSE LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE come across Nash's *A Jazz Companion's Ensemble* (Revelation 32), recorded in 1977-8, will be glad that he has made a further LP. Michael James well described that earlier disc as "an intricate personal synthesis of currents in American music", and this one, too, draws on a rich fund of experience, deploys a wide range of accomplishment. Nash's highly characteristic writing for the ensemble dominates, and almost every track has an identity of its own. For example, the "New York" piece - rather speedy for a nocturne - is palpably from the same hand as "Song For Lanta" but has a quite distinct and separate tone. Even the bouncing Latin rhythms of "Intermission" do not lessen the satisfyingly rich sound of the ensembles. Nash's harmony is a particularly interesting aspect of this, and is often laid out for the instruments in unexpected ways. The many solos are rarely accompanied by the rhythm section alone for long, the ensemble soon joining in behind with its comments.

And very fine most of the solos are, Cochrane in particular being full of ideas besides commanding a very fluent technique. Outstanding, too, is Hartell, whom we met on Phantastic's *Beast Haiberg In New York*, reviewed here last August, and who now emerges as a considerable trumpeter. "After Words" is a slow but purposefully directed concerto mainly for Hartell, and he produces some beautiful ideas, the whole rising to notable lyrical intensity. The remaining players are unknown to me yet are mightily impressive. Nash's seven-string guitar is an important factor as well, introducing most of the pieces. "Uplift", the shortest track, is by him alone; and "Pentecost" is a duet between Nash and Cochrane. "Passing Glance" was on the Revelation LP but is here thrown away on Michele Hendricks's singing of a poor (sub-Jon Hendricks) set of words. However, this does not stop the record being outstanding and unusual.

Max Harrison

rockers like "I Cried" and the naively-titled "I'm Twisted". Warm, unsophisticated and immensely charming.

Mike Atherton

DOMINIQUE CRAVIC, DIDIER

ROUSSIN: Juju-Doudou (A&R Zero Ø).

Guitarists Cravac and Roussin lead a florid pool of friends (including the estimable S. Lacy) through an eclectic programme of material, including Booker Little's "Waltz Of The Demons" and Richard Twardzik's "Yellow Tango". Lots of accordion, violin and harmonica gives the set its curious, slightly schizophrenic feel. It would be a pity if some good and subtle improvisation were to be missed behind all the rather ersatz folkiness, but I did for the first three times round. Worth a try, if a bit contrived (and there's not much Steve Lacy on it).

Brian Morton

ACROSS

- 1 Vocally, the place Ory and others off wished they was in. (6)
- 3 Ed topped many a Heath ensemble with flair, we hear. (5)
- 5 Traditionally, we keep it out of sight till we need to play. (3)
- 6 Bill's tune needs arranging. That's what Tim means. (4,4)
- 8 Indicates where the pitch is. (4)
- 11 Voice broken, boy? A lost treble disastrous! Move in with the low women, perhaps? (5)
- 13 Worshipful character to model oneself on. (4)
- 15 The incomplete Berlin song . . . definitely concluded here? (2,5)
- 16 see 2 down.
- 17 Sinister bias of most musicians, politically, one suspects. (4)
- 19 South Africa's mad! Well, some of that statement needs reorganizing if only to find tenor George. (5)
- 21 Pres mixed up in guise of salesmen! (4)
- 22 see 7 down.
- 25 Bird's time? (3)
- 26 One trumpet man transposed. Did it all single-handedly. (5)
- 27 and 12 down.
Sod Dan's soon then, Trevor!! Non-buskers worried by sort of situation indicated. (2,4,2,3,5)

DOWN

- 1 Add Low for 60s greeting . . . but on its own could be Ira's Galbraith outing. (5)
- 2 and 16 across.
"Dan, the rear all nude!" Surely not "At Vespers" where this Southern Territory Band (British) have recently been performing? Reformed, they should appeal to CAMRA buffs! (4,3,3,7)
- 3 Piano master? Connector of unfastened cylinders? Did influenced by Gipsy strings? Puzzled? Well, go for Colin or Peg-leg. (5)
- 4 Get an affectionate squeeze first, then you might find required for N.O. piano. (6)

KNIGHTS AT THE TURNTABLE

Continued from page 19

re-think their position, weed out all this bullshit about paying vast transmitter fees and so on. But too many people are making too much money out of the established radio system . . . English capitalism is steeped in monopolies and restrictions and keeping things under wraps all the fucking time."

Excuo, most brave! Things under wraps, dark corners, private views. The Englishman's domestic hilt is his castle. Thou shalt not pass, oh warty youth, with thy ghettoblaster, white socks, leather loafers and noisome habit of staying up all night dancing!

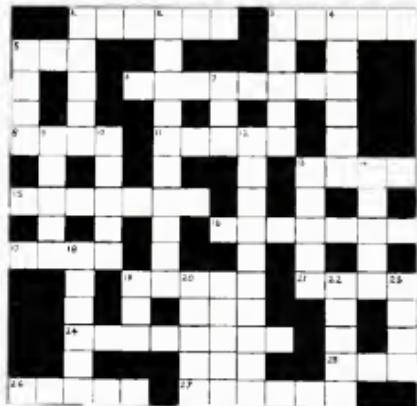
The popular notion of the DJ has expanded in the last decade. It has gone hand in hand with an increasing diversity of taste for different musics and a different attitude to ways in which music might be consumed. Hucker, who gets through music by Horace Silver, Justin Hines & The Dominoes, Eddie Palmieri, Sparrow, Cameo, Thomas Mapfumo and Earl Bostic all in a single evening, scratches his head.

"Well, you can be academic about it and talk in terms of this ever speeding-up spiral of

COMPILED BY

TIM COLWELL

ANSWERS

NEXT
MONTH

JAZZWORD

- 5 Songwriter was a little more than wild . . . yet wove lace-like melodies. (4)
- 7 and 24 across.
"Oh Mensch!" was a surprise Dutch Treat in 1976 . . . whose? (3,8)
- 9 Swedish diminutive. Gullin? (5)
- 10 Woody's request to cool something. (3,2)
- 12 see 27 across.
- 13 Innovation? Partly, we hear. Certainly half of Stevie's mental image. (5)
- 14 EMI merchandise just in the lead. (3,2)
- 18 Lion pushes Eastern music, on disc. You need but sounding like Dickensian Twister, almost! (6)
- 19 Turn little Granny round for vocal Richards. (3)
- 20 Is Neil a backward person? Look for keen tenorist to be sure. (5)
- 22 Green Canuck arranger of Aussie stock nominally Welsh? Unlikely, but . . . Good Heavens! . . . certainly sounds like it! (5)
- 23 Archaic display also makes Bigband Bobby. (4)

things going in and out of fashion. It is a great big whirlpool with everything whizzing around. Some things gravitate towards the centre. You can talk about it in those terms, but I think it's simply because people can get the records. Ten years ago you couldn't really get latin records in any quantity from anywhere; now there's loads of import shops selling latins, African . . ."

But aren't those shops just there to meet a demand?

"No, you create the demand."

The record shops create the demand?
"Well, it's another spiral. The more the shops sell, the more people get to hear the music. The more the DJs play it, the more people get used to it and, therefore, the demand increases. It is the record shops and the people disseminating the music who create the demand. OK then, DJs create demand."

"In this country we've always been more open to different musics. The Americans have their own music; they've got no respect for it whatsoever. Here, it's become a cultural tradition that's sprung up since the 50s when raucous R&B records were brought over from America on the banana boats and landed at Liverpool."

LAST MONTH'S ANSWERS

- ACROSS. 1 Hampton Hawes; 8 (Big Joe) Turner; 10 (Clark) Terry; 11 Mercer (Ellington); 12 Otus (Rush); 13 and 19 'One O'Clock (Jump); 14 (Horace) Silver, 15 (Pee Wee) Russell; 17 Flora (Purim); 21 (Willie The) Lion (Smith); 22 (Art) Themen; 23 (Cedar) Walton, 24 (Johnny) Griffin; 26 (Doc) Li Amp (here); 27 'Now's (The Time)'.
- DOWN: 1 'Hot House Flowers'; 2 Martial Solal, 3 and 28 across 'Then There Eyes', 4 (Bobby) Hutcherson; 5 (Bill) Waltrous, 6 'Strange (Fruit)', 7 (Big) Maybelle; 9 (Weather) Report; 16 (Earl) Swope; 18 Al Cooper (And The Savoy Sultans); 20 (Orrin) Keepnews; 22 (Bob) Thiele; 24 Gene Ammons; 25 (See) Fan (Grossman); 26 (Vic) Ash

Do you think our European eclecticism, our obsession with new things appearing on banana boats, is something of a fetish for the exotic; that if the music didn't have over the horizon from the Caribbean or South America, then it wouldn't be so attractive? This is the Old World after all . . .

"Hmmm. There's an element of truth in that. But you've got to remember to tie up American culture in there and its appeal to post-war teenagers. A whole new, exciting world opened up."

Which we now call American cultural imperialism.

"Yeah."

So, Dave, you see music as the redeeming feature of American cultural imperialism?

"Oh yes. But the bloody Americans don't realize that!"

THE DJ'S RITES ARE NOT PURELY sacerdotal. I asked each of them what they considered to be the most important facet of what they do. They looked at me as if I'd asked the most stupid question in the world, as if I was treating them like Peter Powell. And then they all gave exactly the same answer.

THE WRITE PLACE

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POLITICS

WHEN *WIRE* FIRST CAME OUT, I welcomed it as supplying a need which had not been met since the days of the late *Jazz Monthly*. The criticism was not fossilized, and perspectives were broad. I noticed a Left-wing political bias immediately, but thought it would prove as tolerable as the BBC's. I have been disappointed.

You are alienating potential supporters when you try to make *Wire* the musical supplement to *Miltant*. The average figures for political preference in Britain over an extended period work out at something like 35% Conservative, 35% Labour, 30% Don't Know (Liberal/SDP), and there is no reason to suppose that all jazz lovers will be inclined to the Left.

The politics, religion, sex or personality of a musician may be relevant sometimes — if you are looking for the best places to hear the music, for example, or if you are going to meet him/her/it. But the quality of the music itself is paramount. The political motivation behind the Alan Bush article was scarcely hidden, with names from the Marxist pantheon casually quoted as though they should be known to every reader. Yet Bush is scarcely a major composer. Do we deduce the politics of Boulez, Barbouthule, Carter, etc. by the absence of articles on them?

Nor do we need political pamphlets to justify a composer's titles or an arranger's selection of material. Your writers don't seem to have a purely musical interest in why a piece might be called "Thatcher Blues" or "Hatton Beard".

There is so much good musical analysis and criticism in *Wire*, it will be a tragedy if it is neglected in favour of political posturing. Please don't oblige non-Leftists to cancel their subscriptions.

Roger Bullock, Manchester

LINGUISTICS

I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON Mike Zwerin's statement in *Wire* (Jan '86): "Everybody agrees that Boris Vian is one of the best jazz critics ever, though his jazz writing has never been translated and nobody seems to have read it."

I quite agree with the first half of Mike's observation, but the second half, however, is untrue. A comprehensive selection of Vian's articles has been translated into Dutch by Paul Syrier and was published by Van Gennep in 1984. The selection has been compiled by the late Rudy Koopmans, a most inspiring and unorthodox authority on black music, French literature and gastronomy, who wrote his first enthusiastic reports on Vian's jazzwriting in the 60s.

Erik Van Der Berg, Amsterdam

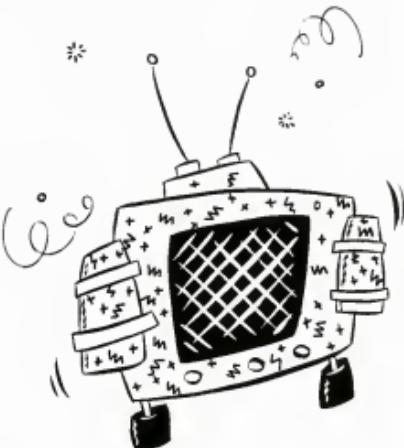
CLAIRVOYANCE

I'VE NO NEED TO REMIND YOU THAT The Maan Man's birthday is on May 25th so let's make *Wire* May issue a special 'Miles at 60'! This may just make up for the lack of Miles articles in *Wire* in the past. After reading the interview Richard did with Miles for *NME* last year, surely there were some 'out-takes' which could be used in *Wire*? I wonder why he never talks to jazz magazines any more and will open up only to the rock papers? But SO WHAT!

Davidsly Yours,
Mrs Barbara Trey, Manchester

P.S. Is it because you guys are STILL so reactionary to his new great music?

See next month, Barbara — RC.



PLAYLIST

WAYNE SHORTER Native Dancer (CBS)

KENNY DORHAM Afro Cuban (Blue Note)

BILL WITHERS Live At Carnegie Hall
(Sussex)

CHET BAKER... Sings & Plays (Pacific Jazz)

EGBERTO GISMONTI Sol Do Meio Dia
(ECM)

MARVIN GAYE Romantically Yours (CBS)

HERMANN/SCOTT Taxi Driver Soundtrack
(Arista)

MANITAS DE PLATA Flamenco Guitar Vol 1 (Connaisseur Society)

YASUAKI SHIMIZU & THE

SAXAPHONETTES L'Automne A Pekin
(Better Days)

JOHN COLTRANE The Gentle Side (Impulse)

DON CHERRY Homeboy (Barclay)

MISSING BRAZILIANS Warzone (On U Sound)

VARIOUS Viva Cuba! (Earthworks)

FRANKIE PAUL Ripe Mango (S.C.O.M.)

DAVE BARTHOLOMEW The Monkey
(Imperial)

DIZZY GILLESPIE Dee Gee Days (Savoy)

LESTER BOWIE I Only Have Eyes For You
(ECM)

HENRY KAISER Alohal (Metalanguagel)

VARIOUS Indestructible Beat Of Soweto
(Earthworks)

ART PEPPER Landscape
(Affinity)

JOHN SCOFIELD Bar Talk (Arista)

CORYELL/REULER Together (Concord)

STEVE LACY Reflections (OJC)

COLTRANE Coltraneology Vol 2
(Affinity)

HAL GALPER Speak With A Single Voice
(Enja)

JONI MITCHELL Shadows & Light
(Asylum)

JIMI HENDRIX Axis Bold As Love
(Polydor)

L SHANKAR Who's To Know (ECM)

ALLAN HOLDSWORTH Metal Fatigue
(Enigma)

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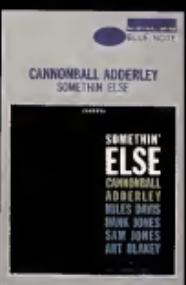
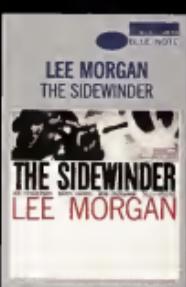
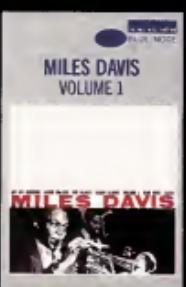
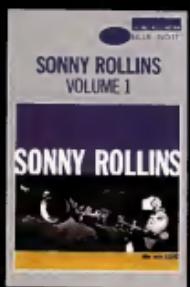
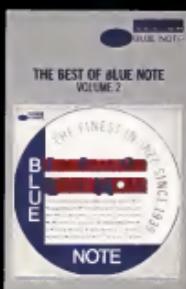
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